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TechLife NEWS

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STATES TARGET THE TECH'S HIDDEN HAND IN AMERICANS' LIVES

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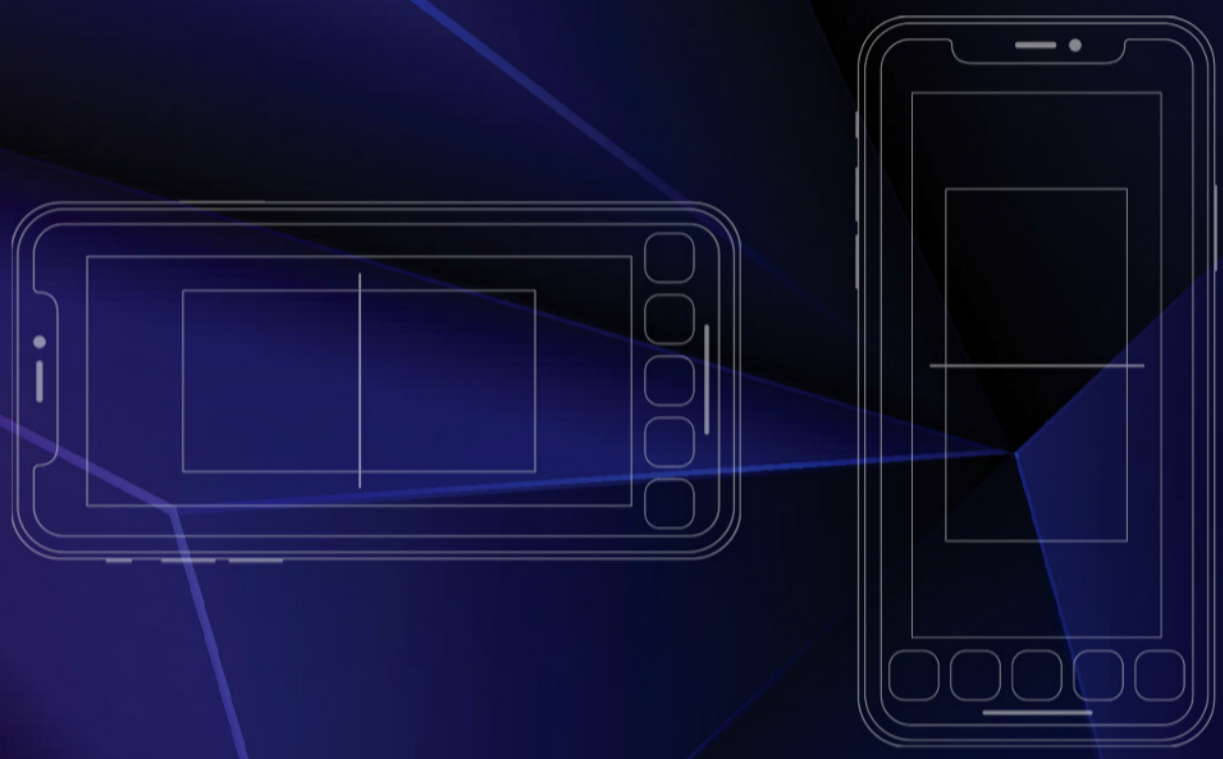

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SUMMARY

FOR SOCIAL PLATFORMS, THE OUTAGE WAS SHORT. BUT PEOPLE'S STORIES... **06**

APPLE IS MAKING BIG APP STORE CHANGES IN EUROPE OVER NEW RULES. COULD... **18**

EUROPEAN REGULATORS WANT TO QUESTION APPLE AFTER IT BLOCKS EPIC GAMES... **32**

IT'S NOT JUST ELON MUSK: CHATGPT-MAKER OPENAI CONFRONTING A... **44**

STATES TARGET AI'S HIDDEN HAND IN AMERICANS' LIVES **56**

TARGET LAUNCHES NEW PAID MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM IN A BID TO DRIVE SALES... **68**

NVIDIA: THE BREAKTHROUGHS BEHIND THE LATEST AI HARDWARE **80**

MADONNA IS AMONG THE EARLY ADOPTERS OF AI'S NEXT WAVE **102**

INTRODUCING THE M3 MACBOOK AIR: A LEAP FORWARD WITH 3-NANOMETER... **116**

DODGE MUSCLE CARS LIVE ON WITH NEW VERSIONS OF THE CHARGER... **144**

HUMANOID ROBOT-MAKER FIGURE PARTNERS WITH OPENAI AND GETS BACKING... **152**

ELON MUSK SUES OPENAI AND CEO SAM ALTMAN, CLAIMING BETRAYAL OF ITS... **160**

GETTING FOOD DELIVERED IN NEW YORK IS SIMPLE. FOR THE WORKERS WHO... **168**

SOME DOORBELL CAMERAS SOLD ON AMAZON AND OTHER ONLINE SITES HAVE... **178**

ONE TECH TIP: CHANGE THESE SETTINGS ON X TO LIMIT CALLS AND HIDE... **184**

SPORTS ANALYTICS MAY BE OUTNUMBERED WHEN IT COMES TO... **190**

IT'S LONELY OUT IN SPACE FOR ADAM SANDLER IN PENSIVE SCI-FI... **198**

EUROPE'S DIGITAL MARKETS ACT IS FORCING TECH GIANTS TO MAKE CHANGES... **212**

APPLE GETS FINED NEARLY $2 BILLION BY THE EU FOR HINDERING MUSIC... **224**

FOR SOCIAL PLATFORMS, THE OUTAGE WAS SHORT. BUT PEOPLE'S STORIES VANISHED, AND THAT'S NO SMALL THING

Mail
Aparat
App Store
Ustawienia
Google Maps
Outlook
11
Pepper
Zdjęcie i wideo
Facebook
WhatsApp
Instagram
Twitter

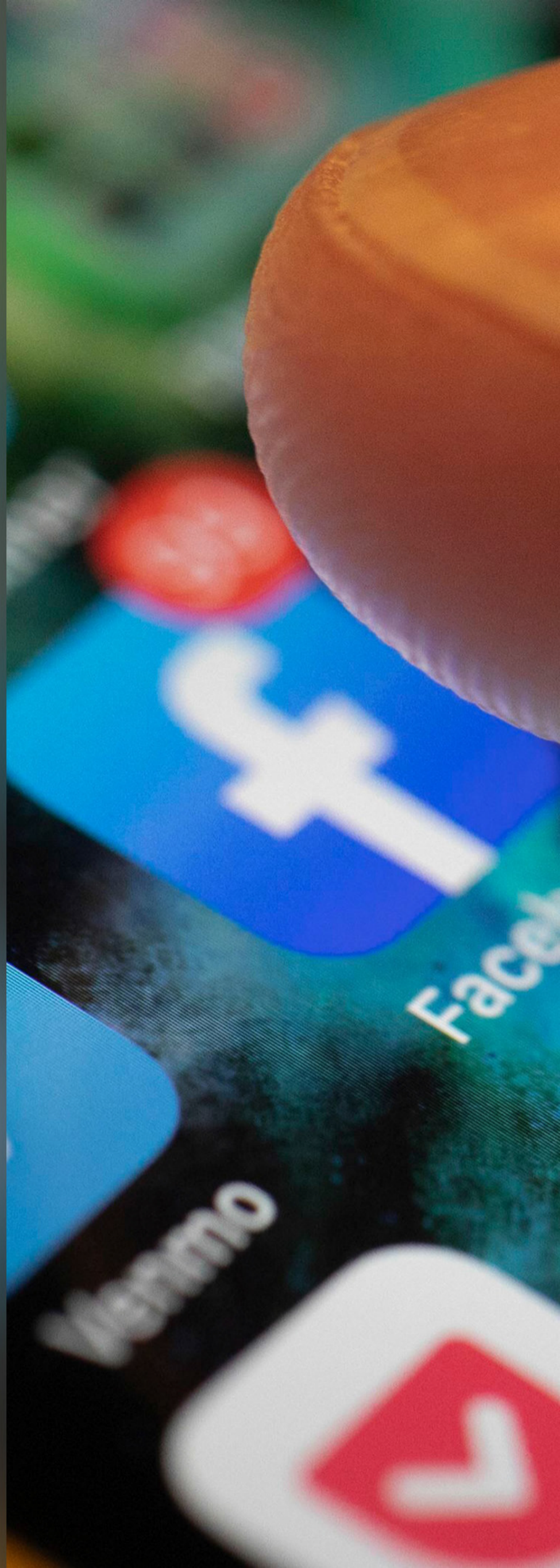
Once upon a time, there was a brief outage on some social media platforms. It got fixed. The end. On the face of it, kind of a boring story.

But the widespread attention given to the blanking of Meta's Facebook, Instagram, Threads and Messenger platforms on Tuesday suggests another, perhaps less obvious tale: the one that shows that social media platforms, like the books or newspapers or insert-medium-here of other times in history, matter more than just being entertaining pastimes.

Wait, you mean those posts from that cousin you rarely see, sharing updates from her kids' lives? That reel from the influencer, introducing you to a culture or bit of knowledge you never knew? That photo collage you put up as a memorial to a loved one whose loss you're grieving? The back-and-forth debate between people on your feed trying to one-up each other on topics that interest you?

Yes. The technologies might be recent. But the things we use them for? That taps into something age-old: Humans are wired to love stories. Telling them. Listening to them. Relating to each other and our communities through them. And, of late, showing them to the world piece by piece through our devices — so much so that one of Instagram's primary features is called, simply, "Stories."

"Our narrative capacity is ... one of the best ways through which we are able to connect with one another," says Evynn McFalls, vice president of marketing and brand at the NeuroLeadership Institute, a consultancy that incorporates neuroscience into its corporate work. "Our brains like stories because it makes it easier for us to understand other people, other circumstances."



Messenger

SOCIAL MEDIA AS A COMMUNITY OF STORIES

In his book "The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human," scholar Jonathan Gottschall says this: "The human imperative to make and consume stories runs even more deeply than literature, dreams and fantasy. We are soaked to the bone in story."

And in these times, social media is so often where they're told — whether in pictures, videos, memes, text threads or mashups of all four. People can get news and information (and OK, yes, misinformation) there, learn and possibly sympathize with others' plights, see things in ways that help us make sense of the world. We tell our own stories on them, make connections with others that might not exist in any other space.

In many ways, these social spaces are where we do "human."

"It's almost impossible for many people, especially in the United States, to think about their lives and communication without thinking about social media," says Samuel Woolley, an assistant professor at the University of Texas at Austin's School of Journalism and Media.

So when they're disrupted? Uh-oh. Threads of connection can disappear. Endorphin-generating activities get cut off. Routines — for better and for worse — are interrupted, and expected flows of information and storytelling hiccup and falter.

"Outside of the trivial nature of these platforms, they've also really morphed over the last 15 years into an advocacy space," says Imani Cheers, associate professor of digital storytelling at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. "Those

types of outages can really cause disruption in the passing and service of information."

It can also ratchet up the impact if the interruption comes at a moment when communication and information are perceived to be needed the most, Woolley notes: In the United States, the outage corresponded with the moments many were heading to the polls for Super Tuesday.

"Even though the recent outage only lasted a handful of hours for most people, it still resulted in a lack of access to the news," Woolley says. "And that's a problem."

A CREEPING SENSE OF UNEASE?

After the outages happened Tuesday, Andy Stone, Meta's head of communications, acknowledged them on X, formerly known as Twitter. "We apologize for any inconvenience," he wrote. But for some, it was more visceral than simple inconvenience. Their stories and their online lives were at stake.

When Taylor Cole Miller, an assistant professor of communication studies at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, first realized that he wasn't getting into his Facebook account Tuesday, his initial concern was security — that he had somehow been hacked.

Shortly afterward came creeping panic: What if he had lost almost two decades of his Facebook existence, including some connections with people he only had over the platform?

"I hesitate to say that my life flashed before my eyes, because that's just so overwrought," he says. "But the fact of the matter is that as someone who's been on Facebook for

Facebook

20 years, a significant amount of my life is archived" there.

"Many of the ways that I connect with people is merely through Facebook. What happens if poof, it just goes away really fast? What does that mean for who I am as a person and how I interact with other people?"

That type of reaction about losing something that's so part of the fabric of one's day speaks to the power of story to connect us, says Melanie Green, a professor in the department of communication at the University of Buffalo. And, not incidentally, to the platforms that amplify those stories.

"Humans have a need to belong. We're social species, our survival often depends on being part of groups," she says. "Stories can help us feel that sense of belongingness."

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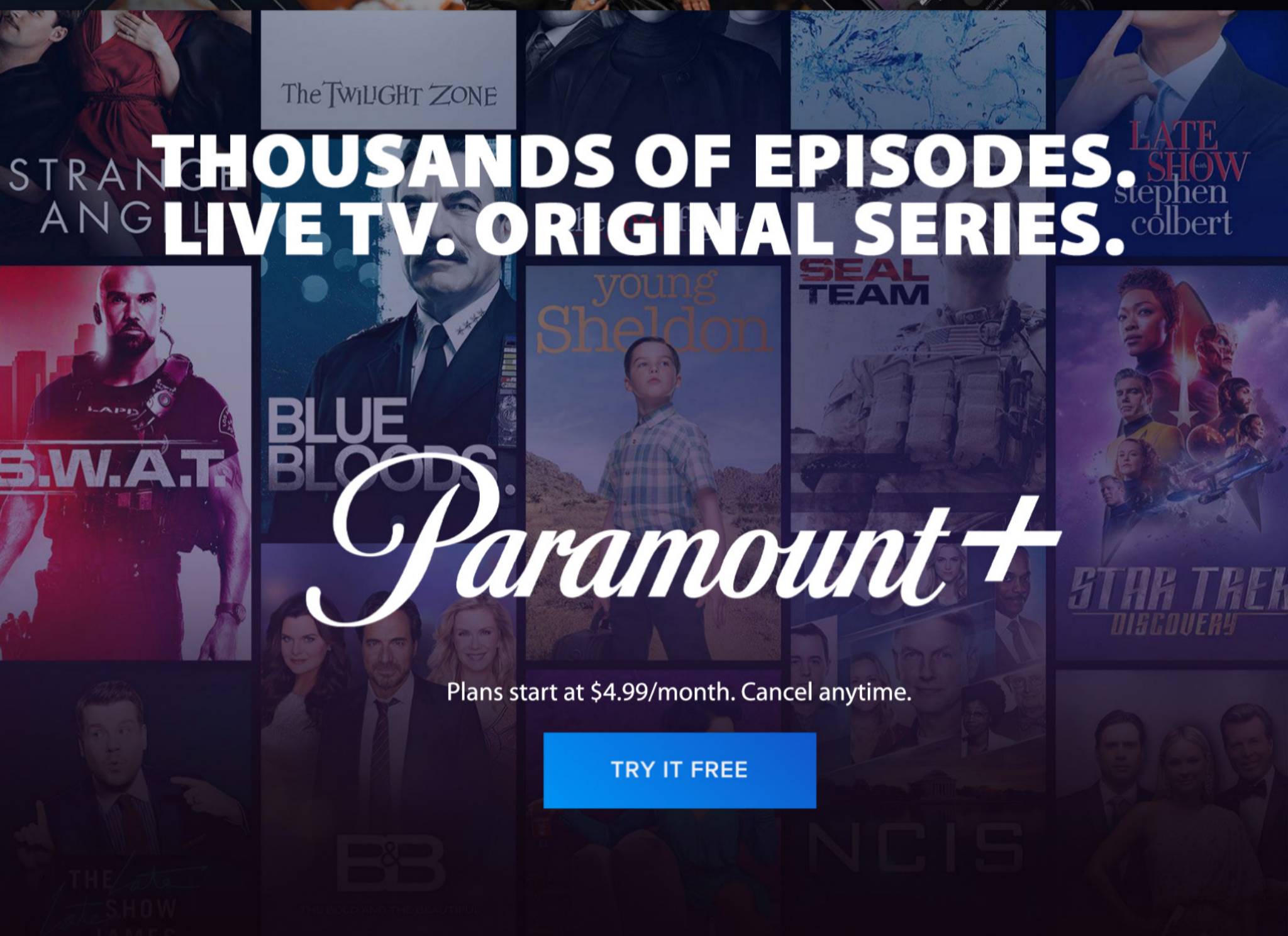

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APPLE IS MAKING BIG APP STORE CHANGES IN EUROPE OVER NEW RULES. COULD IT MEAN MORE IPHONE HACKING?

Apple is opening small cracks in the iPhone's digital fortress as part of a regulatory clampdown in Europe that is striving to give consumers more choices — at the risk of creating new avenues for hackers to steal personal and financial information stored on the devices.

The overhaul rolling out Thursday only in the European Union represents the biggest changes to the iPhone's App Store since Apple introduced the concept in 2008. Among other things, people in Europe can download iPhone apps from stores that aren't operated by Apple and are getting alternative ways to pay for in-app transactions.

EPIC
GAMES

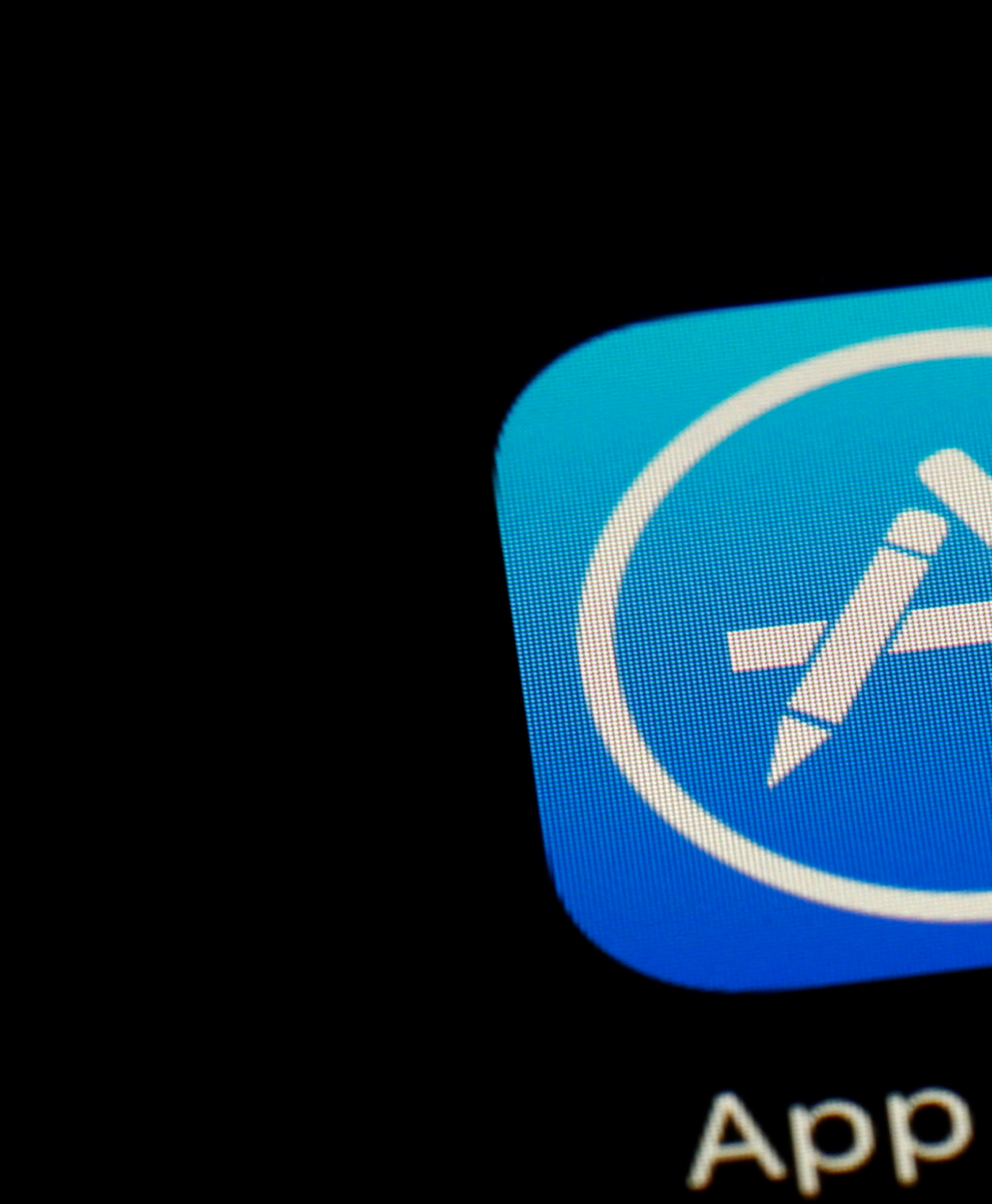
European regulators are hoping the changes mandated by the Digital Markets Act, or DMA, will loosen the control that Big Tech's "digital gatekeepers" have gained over the products and services that consumers and businesses use as they become more dominant forces in everyday life.

The measures are taking effect just days after EU regulators fined Apple nearly $2 billion (1.8 billion euros) for thwarting competition in the music streaming market.

Apple has lashed out at the new regulations for unnecessary security risks to iPhone users in Europe, exposing them to more scams and other malicious attacks launched from apps downloaded from outside its ecosystems and raising the specter of more unsavory services peddling pornography, illegal drugs and other content that the company has long prohibited in its App Store.

Despite trying to maintain security safeguards while also adhering to the new rules in the 27-nation bloc, Apple is warning that "the changes the DMA requires will inevitably cause a gap between the protections that Apple users outside of the EU can rely on and the protections available to users in the EU moving forward."

But some smaller tech companies such as music streaming service Spotify and video game maker Epic Games are attacking the ways Apple is complying with the DMA as little more than a facade that's making a "mockery" of the regulations' intent.



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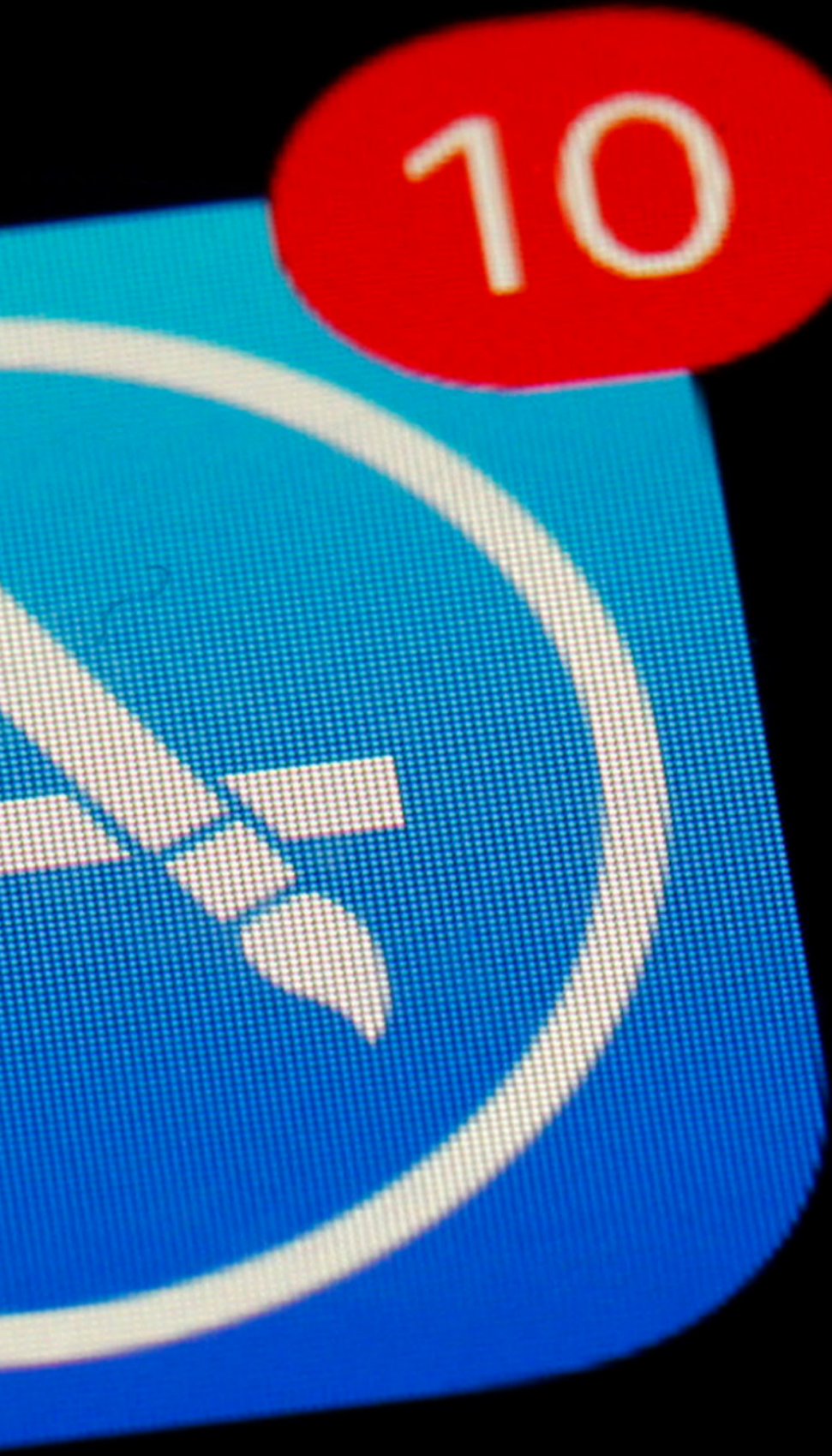
10
Store

"Rather than creating healthy competition and new choices, Apple's new terms will erect new barriers and reinforce Apple's stronghold over the iPhone ecosystem," Spotify, Epic and more than two dozen other companies and alliances wrote in a March 1 letter to the European Commission, the EU's executive arm overseeing the DMA.

Epic, which is behind the popular Fortnite game, also contends Apple is already brazenly violating the DMA by rejecting an alternative iPhone app store it planned to release in Sweden. Epic asserted Apple thwarted its attempt to compete as retaliation for scathing critiques posted by CEO Tim Sweeney, who spearheaded a mostly unsuccessful antitrust case against the iPhone App Store in the U.S.

In response, EU regulators said Thursday that they want to question Apple over allegations it blocked Epic's app store. Apple was defiant, saying it "chose to exercise that right" to boot the app store based on Epic's past behavior.

Europe's shifting digital landscape also is forcing changes at other technology powerhouses such as Google and Facebook, but the new regulations strike at the core of Apple's philosophy of maintaining ironclad control over every aspect of its products.

Image: Stephanie Lecocq

This "walled garden" approach conceived by late co-founder Steve Jobs begins with the meticulous design of the hardware and then extends into all the software powering it devices, as well as overseeing the commerce occurring on them.

The approach built an empire with nearly $400 billion in annual revenue — a measure of success that Apple directly traces to the trust it has built through decades of vigilant management of the iPhone and other popular products such as the iPad, Mac and Apple Watch.

Even Epic's Sweeney acknowledged that one of the reasons he uses an iPhone is because of the staunch security measures that Apple has deployed to thwart hackers and protect the privacy of its customers. That came during testimony in a May 2021 trial resulting in a U.S. judge ruling that the App Store isn't a monopoly.

In that decision, the judge required Apple to begin allowing links to outside payment options inside iPhone apps in the U.S. It's a requirement that the company began to allow earlier this year after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear an appeal on that issue.

Apple — which is making changes in Europe through an iPhone software update — still doesn't permit alternative iPhone app stores in the U.S. or more than 100 other countries outside the EU.

European regulators appear convinced that the benefits consumers stand to reap from more competition will outweigh the increased security risks.

One potential positive is lower prices for digital transactions within apps if competing stores charge lower commissions than the 15% to 30% fees Apple has been imposing for years.

But critics are raising doubts that will happen because Apple still plans to charge fees after app downloads reach relatively low thresholds and have set up other hurdles that will make it daunting for alternative options to make significant inroads in Europe.

For its part, Apple insists the security problems being hatched by the DMA are so worrisome that it has been hearing from government agencies — especially those involved in defense, banking and emergency services — wanting to ensure they will be able to block employees with iPhones from accessing apps distributed from outside Apple's walled garden.

"These agencies have all recognized that sideloading — downloading apps from outside the App Store — could compromise security and put government data and devices at risk," Apple said.

Image: David Paul Morris

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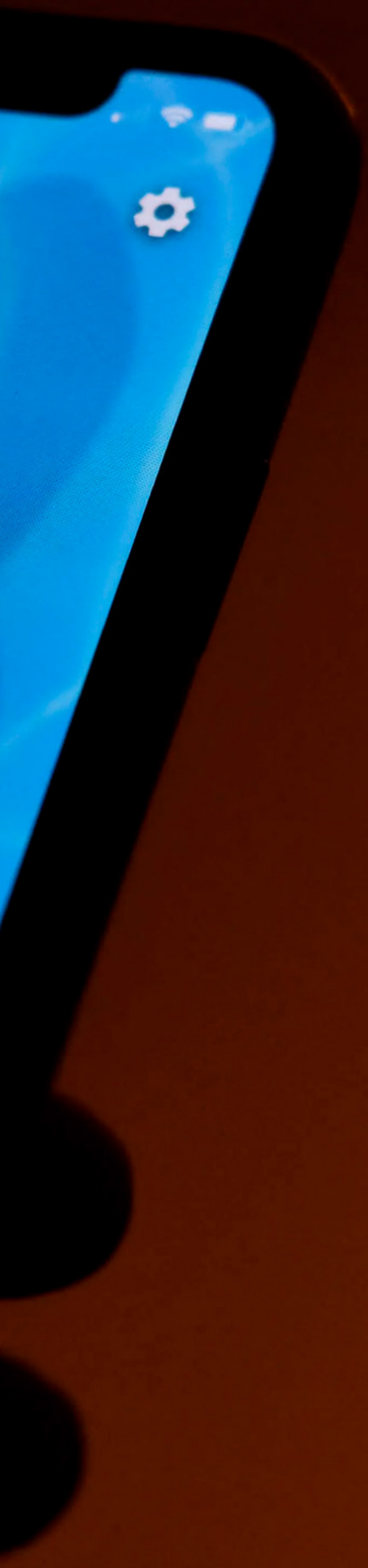


Image: Chris Delmas

EUROPEAN REGULATORS WANT TO QUESTION APPLE AFTER IT BLOCKS EPIC GAMES APP STORE

European Union regulators said they want to question Apple over accusations that it blocked video game company Epic Games from setting up its own app store, in a possible violation of digital rules that took effect in the 27-nation bloc Thursday.

It's a fresh escalation of the high-stakes battle between the two companies. Epic, maker of the popular game Fortnite, has spent years fighting Apple's exclusive control over the distribution of iPhone apps.

#FREEFORTNITE

EPIC GAMES

Epic asserted Wednesday that Apple thwarted its attempt to set up its own iOS app marketplace to compete with Apple's App Store, calling it a breach of the EU's new Digital Markets Act.

The sweeping set of rules, designed to stop big tech companies from cornering digital markets, have forced Apple to allow people in Europe to download iPhone apps from stores not operated by the U.S. tech giant — a move it's long resisted.

The European Commission, the EU's top antitrust watchdog, said in a statement Thursday that it has "requested further explanations on this from Apple under the DMA." The rules threaten penalties that could reach into the billions for violations.

The commission said it's "also evaluating whether Apple's actions raise doubts on their compliance" with other EU regulations including the Digital Services Act, a second set of regulations in the bloc's digital rulebook that prohibit tech companies from "arbitrary application" of their terms and conditions.

Epic contended that Apple was brazenly violating the DMA by rejecting an alternative iPhone app store that it planned to set up in Sweden to serve European Union users.

Image: Chris Delmas

App Store

EPIC
GAMES
Epic Games

FORTNITE
LOADING...
This may take a few seconds...

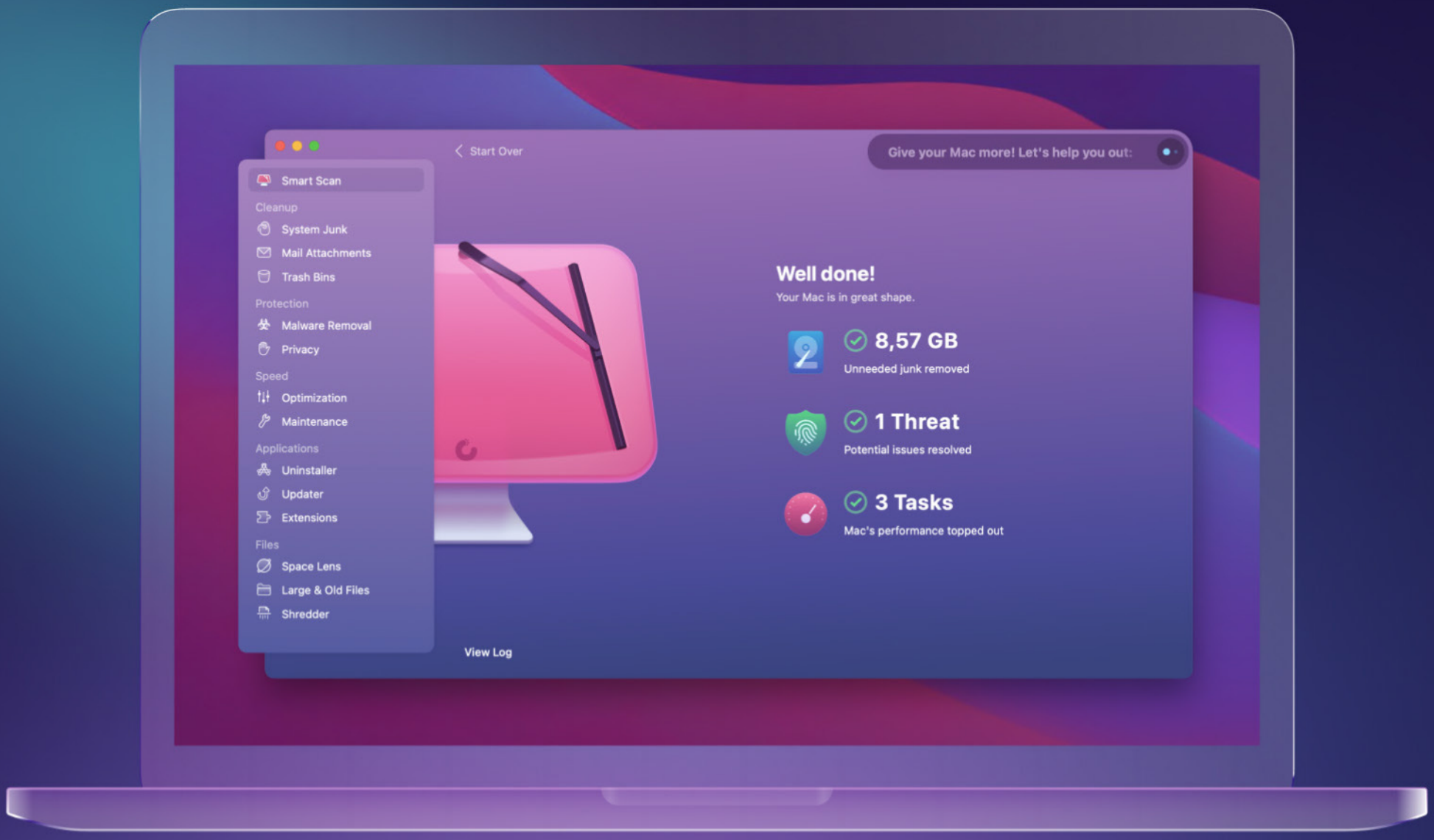
It accused Apple of retaliating for scathing critiques posted by CEO Tim Sweeney, who spearheaded a mostly unsuccessful antitrust case against the iPhone App Store in the U.S.

Apple said its action was justified because of Epic's previous unlawful actions and litigation that resulted in the U.S. court decision in 2021.

Apple ousted Epic from its App Store after it tried to get around restrictions that Apple says protect the security and privacy of iPhone users, while also helping recoup some of the investment that powers one of the world's most ubiquitous devices.

"Epic's egregious breach of its contractual obligations to Apple led courts to determine that Apple has the right to terminate 'any or all of Epic Games' wholly owned subsidiaries, affiliates, and/or other entities under Epic Games' control at any time and at Apple's sole discretion,'" Apple said in a statement. "In light of Epic's past and ongoing behavior, Apple chose to exercise that right."

Image: Chris Delmas



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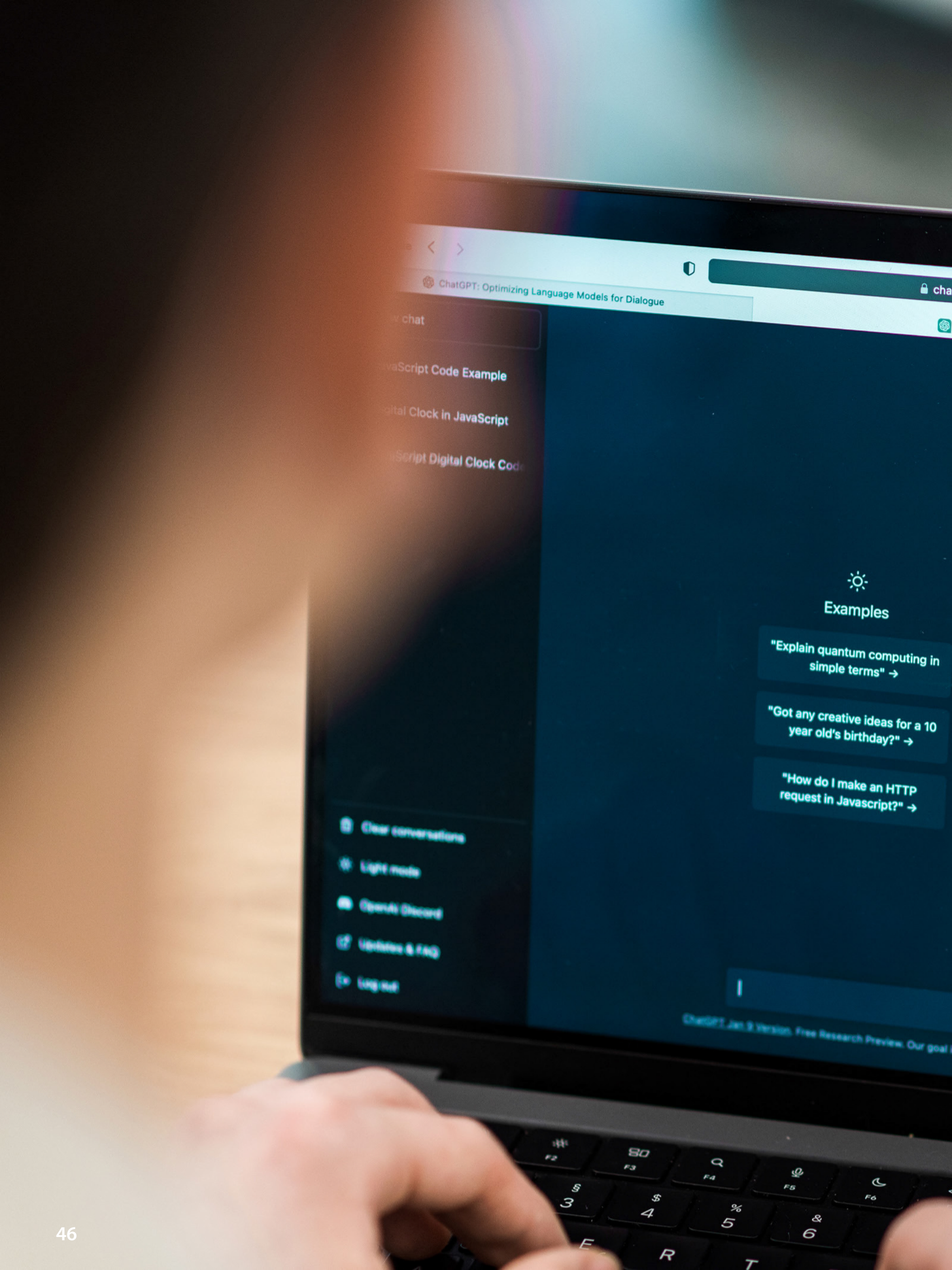
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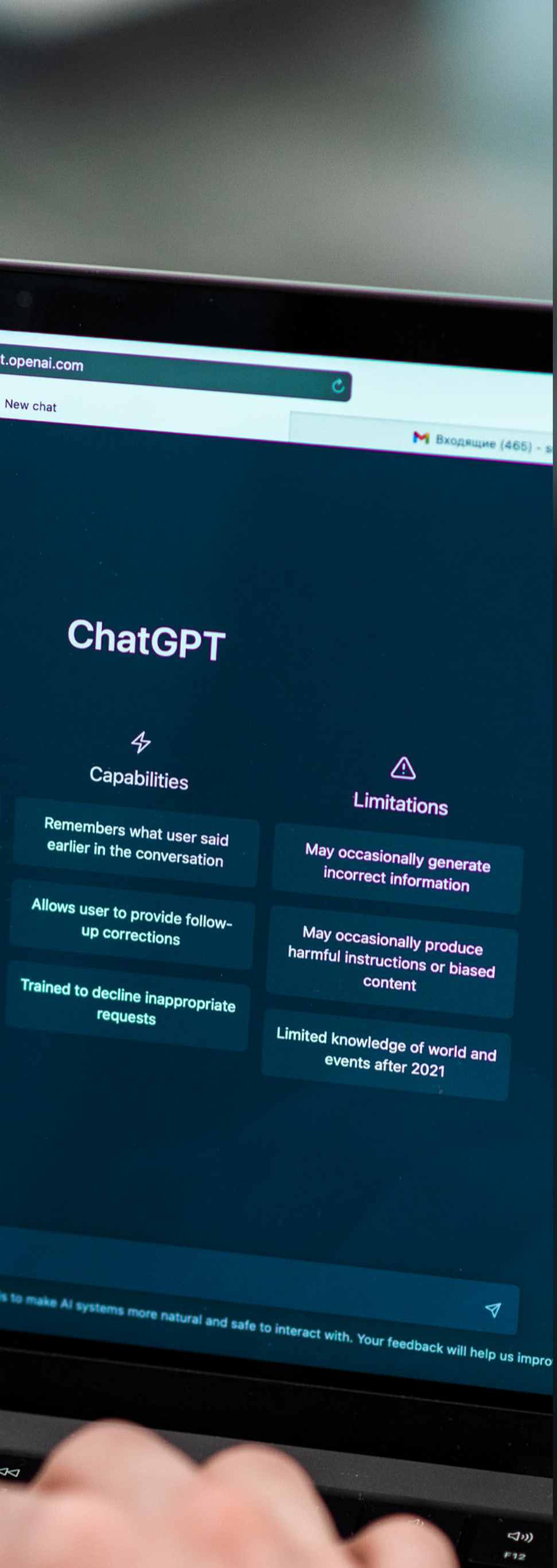

After a year of basking in global fame, the San Francisco company OpenAI is now confronting a multitude of challenges that could threaten its position at the vanguard of artificial intelligence research.

Some of its conflicts stem from decisions made well before the debut of ChatGPT, particularly its unusual shift from an idealistic nonprofit to a big business backed by billions of dollars in investments.

It's too early to tell if OpenAI and its attorneys will beat back a barrage of lawsuits from Elon Musk, The New York Times and bestselling novelists such as John Grisham, not to mention escalating scrutiny from government regulators, or if any of it will stick.

FEUD WITH ELON MUSK

OpenAI isn't waiting for the court process to unfold before publicly defending itself against legal claims made by billionaire Elon Musk, an early funder of OpenAI who now alleges it has betrayed its founding nonprofit mission to benefit humanity as it pursued profits instead.

In its first response since the Tesla CEO sued last week, OpenAI vowed to get the claim thrown out and released emails from Musk that purport to show he supported making OpenAI a for-profit company and even suggested merging it with the electric vehicle maker.

Legal experts have expressed doubt about whether Musk's arguments, centered around an alleged breach of contract, will hold up in court. But it has already forced open the company's internal conflicts about its unusual governance structure, how "open" it should be about its

research and how to pursue what's known as artificial general intelligence, or AI systems that can perform just as well as — or even better than — humans in a wide variety of tasks.

ITS OWN INTERNAL INVESTIGATION

There's still a lot of mystery about what led OpenAI to abruptly fire its co-founder and CEO Sam Altman in November, only to have him return days later with a new board that replaced the one that ousted him. OpenAI tapped the law firm WilmerHale to investigate what happened, but it's unclear how broad its scope will be and to what extent OpenAI will publicly release its findings.

Among the big questions is what OpenAI — under its previous board of directors — meant in November when it said Altman was "not consistently candid in his communications" in a way that hindered the board's ability to exercise its responsibilities. While now primarily a for-profit business, OpenAI is still governed by a nonprofit board of directors whose duty is to advance its mission.

The investigators are probably looking more closely at that structure as well as the internal conflicts that led to communication breakdowns, said Diane Rulke, a professor of organizational behavior and theory at Carnegie Mellon University.

Rulke said it would be "useful and very good practice" for OpenAI to publicly release at least part of the findings, especially given the underlying concerns about how future AI technology will affect society.

"Not only because it was a major event, but because OpenAI works with a lot of businesses, a

MI
What is ChatGPT and how does it work?
ChatGPT is a large language model develo
Pre-trained Transformer) architecture. It is
that can process and understand natural
questions or prompts.
GPT is a type of neural n
large amounts of text d
internet, including bo
language and the w
Once trained, Cha
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lot of companies and their impact is widespread," Rulke said. "Even though they're a privately held company, it's very much in the public interest to know what happened at OpenAI."

GOVERNMENT SCRUTINY

OpenAI's close business ties to Microsoft have invited scrutiny from antitrust regulators in the U.S. and Europe. Microsoft has invested billions of dollars into OpenAI and switched on its vast computing power to help build the smaller company's AI models. The software giant has also secured exclusive rights to infuse much of the technology into Microsoft products.

Unlike a big business merger, such partnerships don't automatically trigger a government review. But the Federal Trade Commission wants to know if such arrangements "enable dominant firms to exert undue influence or gain privileged access in ways that could undermine fair competition," FTC Chair Lina Khan said in January.

FTC is awaiting responses to "compulsory orders" it sent to both companies — as well as OpenAI rival Anthropic and its own cloud computing backers, Amazon and Google — requiring them to provide information about the partnerships and the decision-making around them. The companies' responses are due as soon as next week. Similar scrutiny is happening in the European Union and the United Kingdom.

COPYRIGHT LAWSUITS

Bestselling novelists, nonfiction authors, The New York Times and other media outlets have sued OpenAI over allegations that the company violated copyright laws in building the AI large

language models that power ChatGPT. Several of the lawsuits also target Microsoft.

OpenAI has argued that its practice of training AI models on huge troves of writings found on the internet is protected by the "fair use" doctrine of copyright law. Federal judges in New York and San Francisco must now sort through evidence of harm brought by numerous plaintiffs, including Grisham, comedian Sarah Silverman and "Game of Thrones" author George R. R. Martin.

The stakes are high. The Times, for instance, is asking a judge to order the "destruction" of all of OpenAI's GPT large language models — the foundation of ChatGPT and most of OpenAI's business — if they were trained on its news articles.

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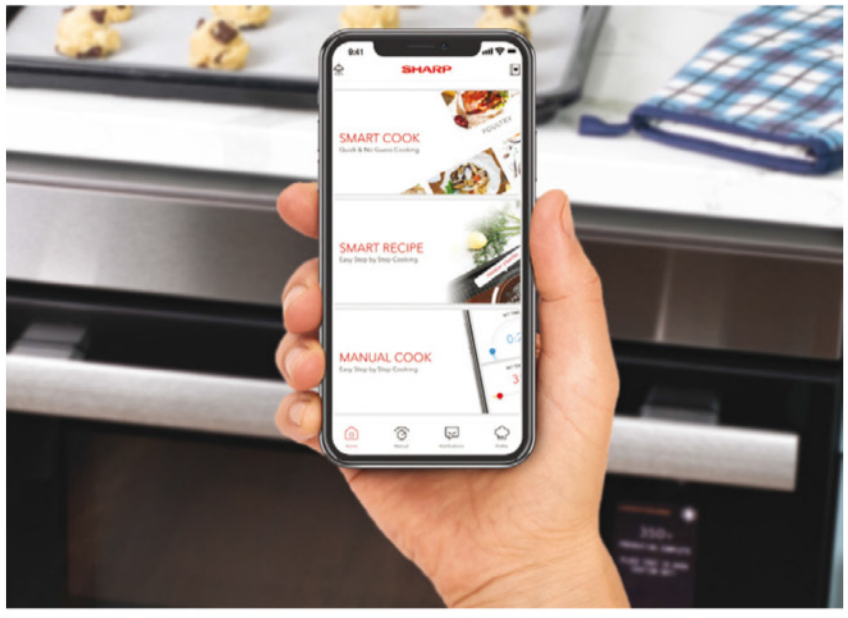

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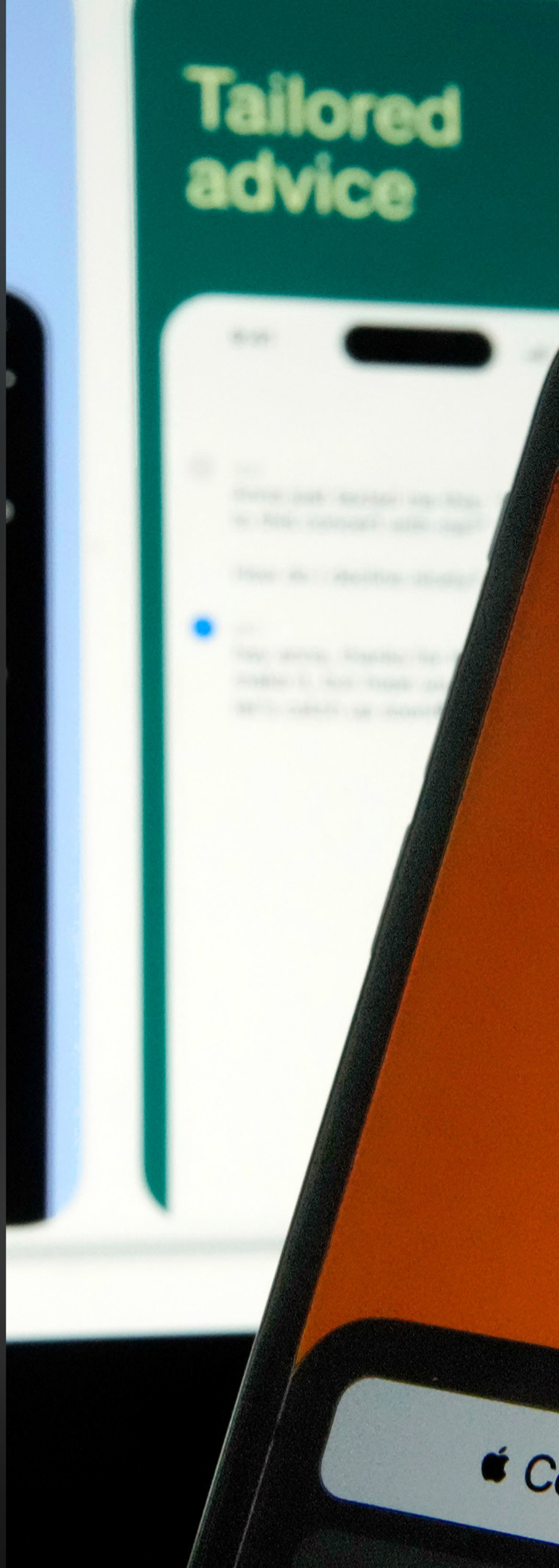
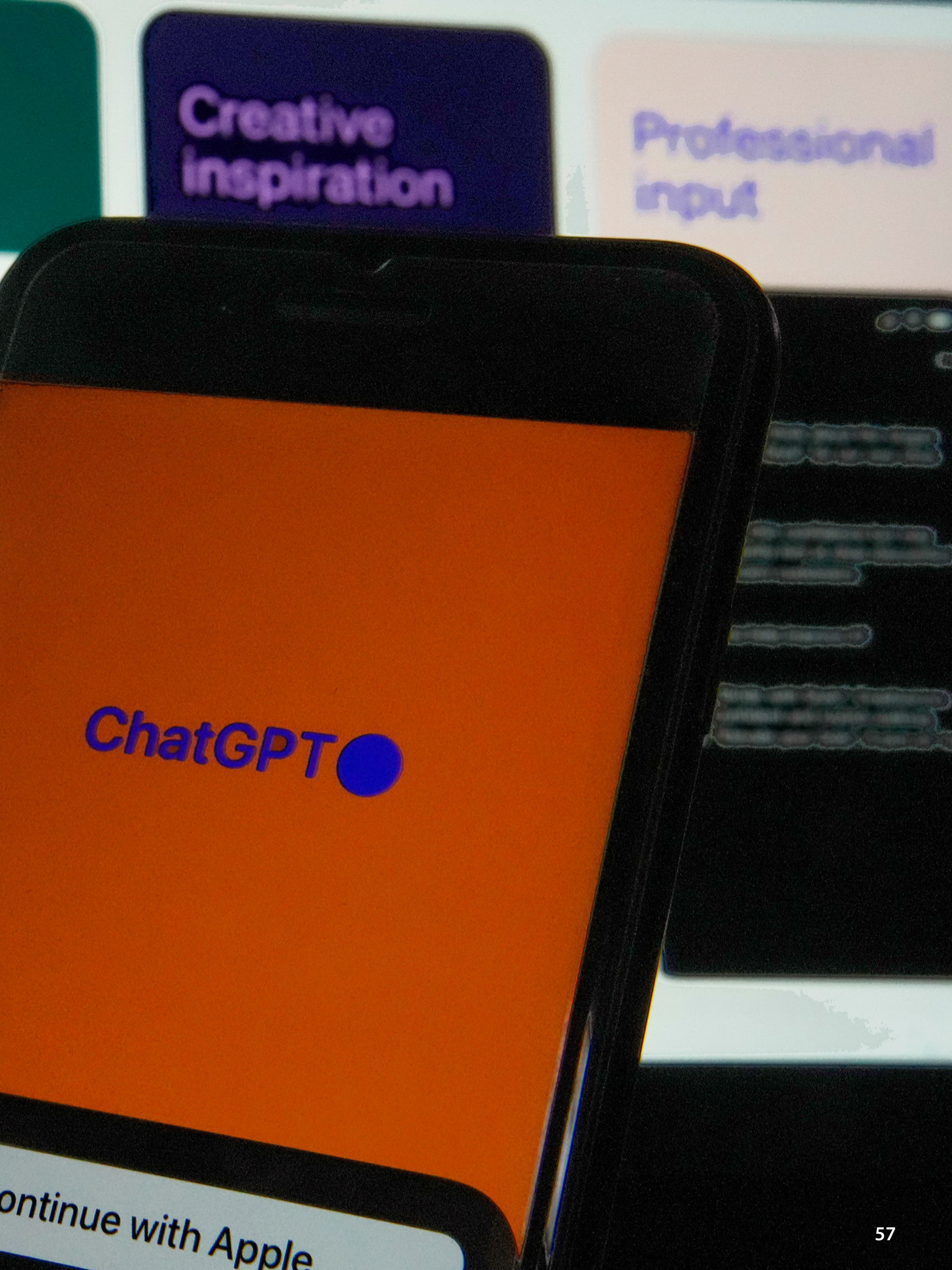


While artificial intelligence made headlines with ChatGPT, behind the scenes, the technology has quietly pervaded everyday life — screening job resumes, rental apartment applications, and even determining medical care in some cases.

While a number of AI systems have been found to discriminate, tipping the scales in favor of certain races, genders or incomes, there's scant government oversight.

Lawmakers in at least seven states are taking big legislative swings to regulate bias in artificial intelligence, filling a void left by Congress' inaction. These proposals are some of the first steps in a decades-long discussion over balancing the benefits of this nebulous new technology with the widely documented risks.

"AI does in fact affect every part of your life whether you know it or not," said Suresh


Creative inspiration
ChatGPT
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Venkatasubramanian, a Brown University professor who co-authored the White House's Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights.

"Now, you wouldn't care if they all worked fine. But they don't."

Success or failure will depend on lawmakers working through complex problems while negotiating with an industry worth hundreds of billions of dollars and growing at a speed best measured in lightyears.

Last year, only about a dozen of the nearly 200 AI-related bills introduced in statehouses were passed into law, according to BSA The Software Alliance, which advocates on behalf of software companies.

Those bills, along with the over 400 AI-related bills being debated this year, were largely aimed at regulating smaller slices of AI. That includes nearly 200 targeting deepfakes, including proposals to bar pornographic deepfakes, like those of Taylor Swift that flooded social media. Others are trying to rein in chatbots, such as ChatGPT, to ensure they don't cough up instructions to make a bomb, for example.

Those are separate from the seven state bills that would apply across industries to regulate AI discrimination — one of the technology's most perverse and complex problems — being debated from California to Connecticut.

Those who study AI's penchant to discriminate say states are already behind in establishing guardrails. The use of AI to make consequential decisions — what the bills call "automated decision tools" — is pervasive but largely hidden.

It's estimated as many as 83% of employers use algorithms to help in hiring; that's 99% for Fortune 500 companies, according to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

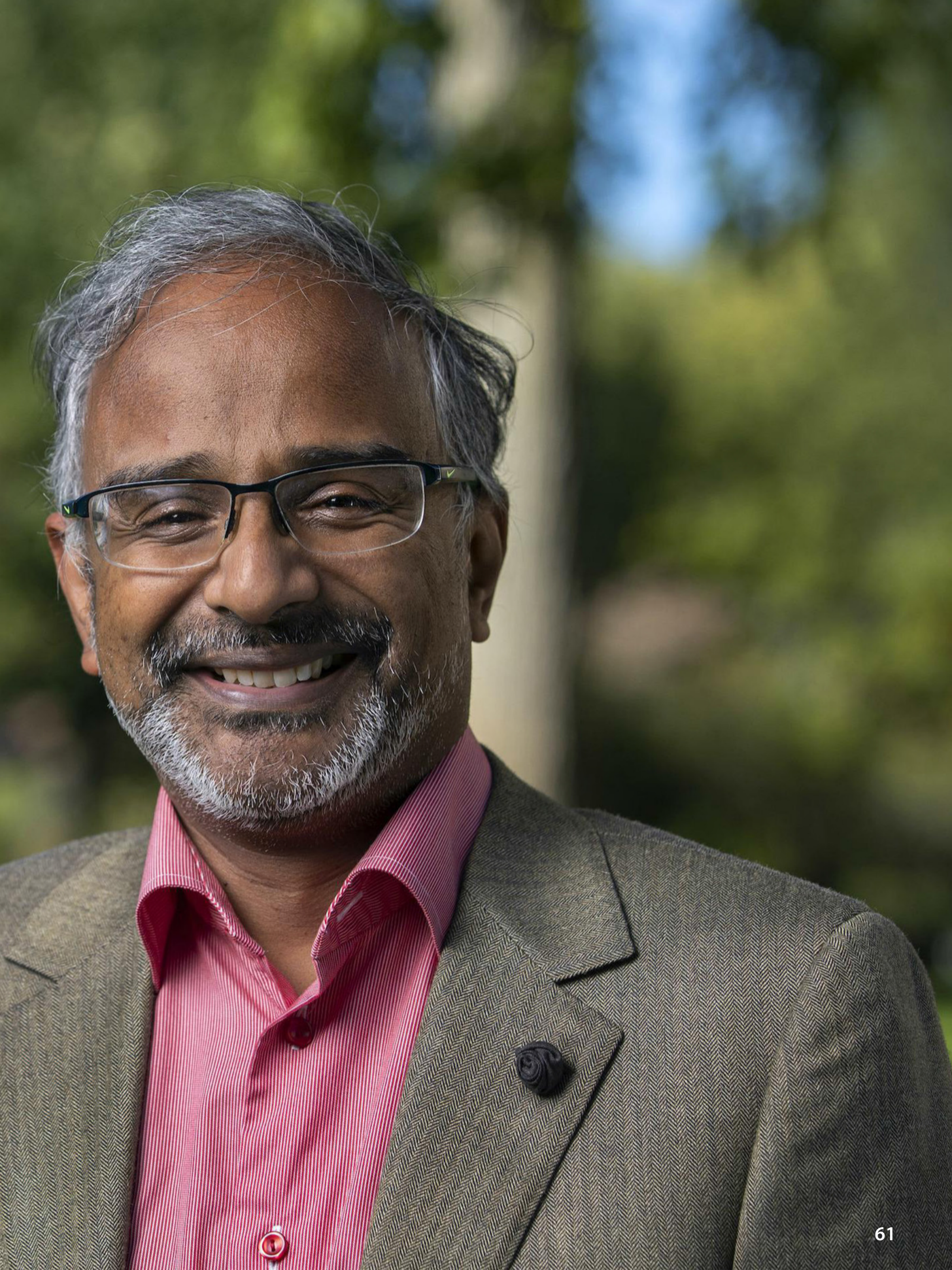
Yet the majority of Americans are unaware that these tools are being used, polling from Pew Research shows, let alone whether the systems are biased.

An AI can learn bias through the data it's trained on, typically historical data that can hold a Trojan Horse of past discrimination.

Amazon scuttled its hiring algorithm project after it was found to favor male applicants nearly a decade ago. The AI was trained to assess new resumes by learning from past resumes — largely male applicants. While the algorithm didn't know the applicants' genders, it still downgraded resumes with the word "women's" or that listed women's colleges, in part because they were not represented in the historical data it learned from.

"If you are letting the AI learn from decisions that existing managers have historically made, and if those decisions have historically favored some people and disfavored others, then that's what the technology will learn," said Christine Webber, the attorney in a class-action lawsuit alleging that an AI system scoring rental applicants discriminated against those who were Black or Hispanic.

Court documents describe one of the lawsuit's plaintiffs, Mary Louis, a Black woman, applied to rent an apartment in Massachusetts and received a cryptic response: "The third-party service we utilize to screen all prospective tenants has denied your tenancy."



When Louis submitted two landlord references to show she'd paid rent early or on time for 16 years, court records say, she received another reply: "Unfortunately, we do not accept appeals and cannot override the outcome of the Tenant Screening."

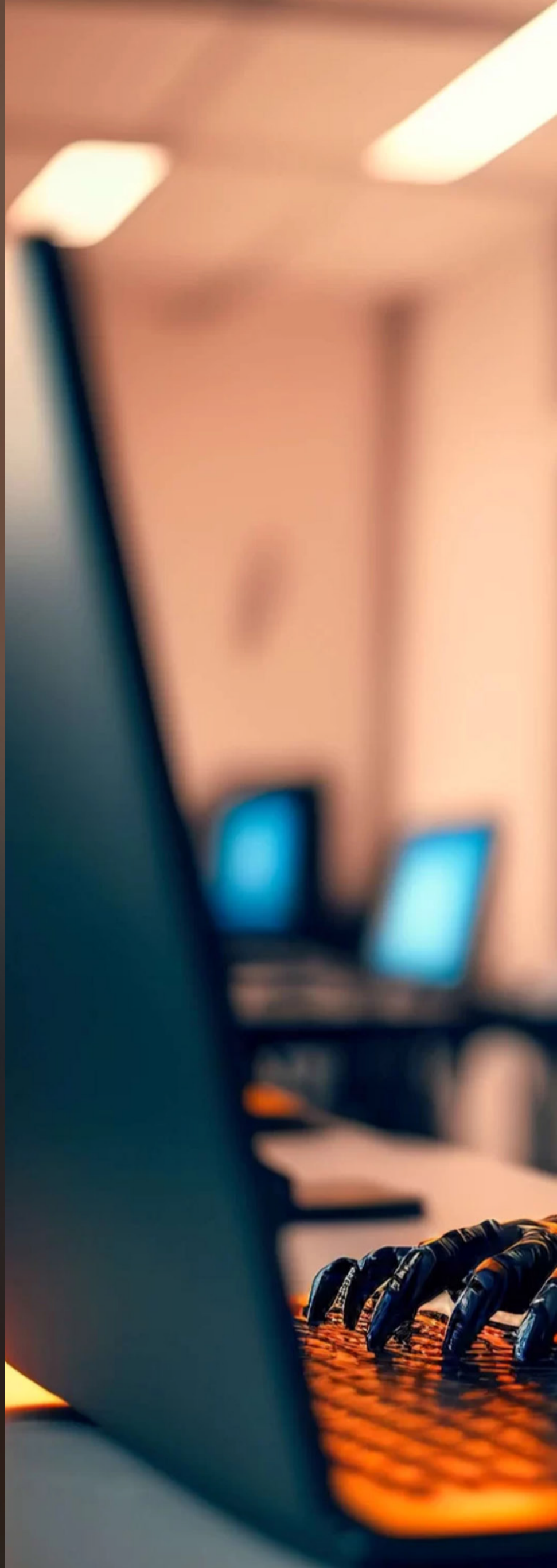
That lack of transparency and accountability is, in part, what the bills are targeting, following the lead of California's failed proposal last year — the first comprehensive attempt at regulating AI bias in the private sector.

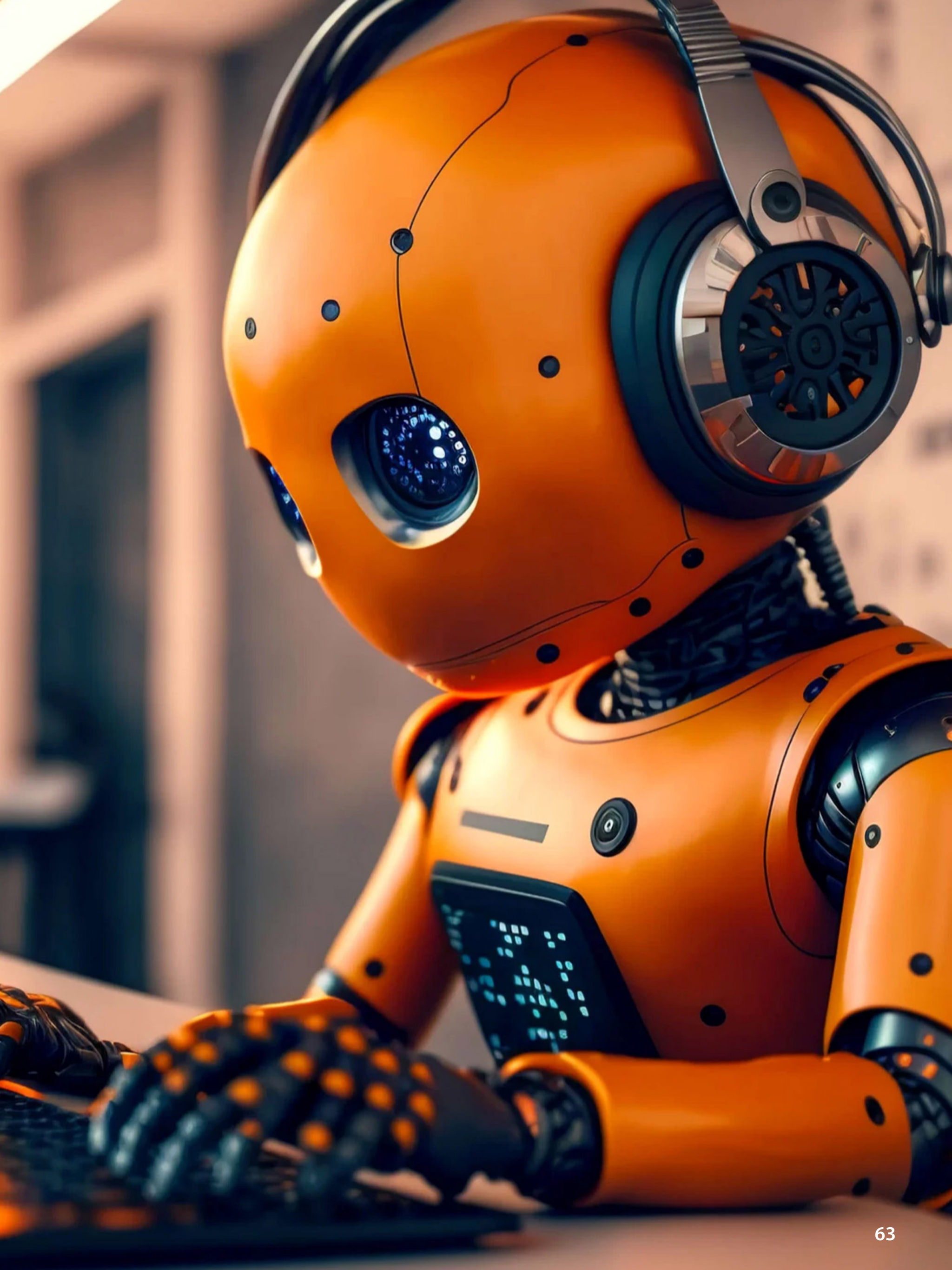
Under the bills, companies using these automated decision tools would have to do "impact assessments," including descriptions of how AI figures into a decision, the data collected and an analysis of the risks of discrimination, along with an explanation of the company's safeguards. Depending on the bill, those assessments would be submitted to the state or regulators could request them.

Some of the bills would also require companies to tell customers that an AI will be used in making a decision, and allow them to opt out, with certain caveats.

Craig Albright, senior vice president of U.S. government relations at BSA, the industry lobbying group, said its members are generally in favor of some steps being proposed, such as impact assessments.

"The technology moves faster than the law, but there are actually benefits for the law catching up. Because then (companies) understand what their responsibilities are, consumers can have greater trust in the technology," Albright said.





But it's been a lackluster start for legislation. A bill in Washington state has already floundered in committee, and a California proposal introduced in 2023, which many of the current proposals are modeled off of, also died.

California Assembly member Rebecca Bauer-Kahan has revamped her legislation that failed last year with the support of some tech companies, such as Workday and Microsoft, after dropping a requirement that companies routinely submit their impact assessments. Other states where bills are, or are expected to be, introduced are Colorado, Rhode Island, Illinois, Connecticut, Virginia and Vermont.

While these bills are a step in the right direction, said Venkatasubramanian of Brown University, the impact assessments and their ability to catch bias remain vague. Without greater access to the reports — which many of the bills limit — it's also hard to know whether a person has been discriminated against by an AI.

A more intensive but accurate way to identify discrimination would be to require bias audits — tests to determine whether an AI is discriminating or not — and to make the results public. That's where the industry pushes back, arguing that would expose trade secrets.

Requirements to routinely test an AI system aren't in most of the legislative proposals, nearly all of which still have a long road ahead. Still, it's the start of lawmakers and voters wrestling with what's becoming, and will remain, an ever-present technology.

"It covers everything in your life. Just by virtue of that you should care," said Venkatasubramanian.

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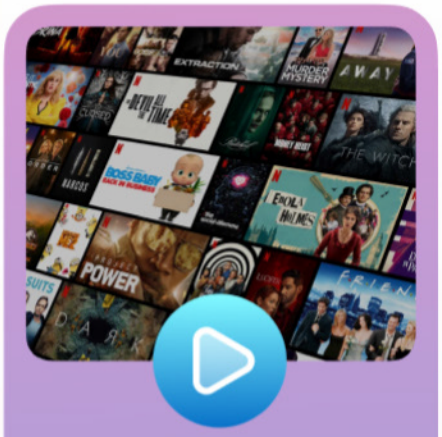

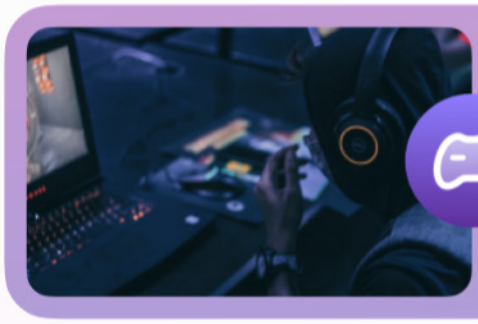

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TARGET LAUNCHES NEW PAID MEMBERSHIP PROGRAM IN A BID TO DRIVE SALES AT A TIME OF CAUTIOUS SPENDING

TARGET

Target, looking for ways to reverse a sales malaise, is getting into Amazon territory: the paid membership game.

The Minneapolis discounter said this week the new paid program, called Target Circle 360, will offer unlimited free same-day delivery in as little as an hour for orders over $35 and free two-day shipping. It will launch with a special offer for new members for $49 per year from April 7 through May 18. After that, it will cost $99 per year. But Target Circle credit card holders can sign up for the lower price anytime.

The discounter said its current Target Circle program has more than 100 million members who shop and spend more than five times more than non-members.

The launch of a new paid membership program was one of several key moves announced at Target's annual investors' meeting that aim to rejuvenate sales and traffic. The discounter also said it will refresh its stores and expand its highly successful store-owned brands, which combined generate $30 billion in sales. And over the next decade, the chain will build more than 300 new stores.

The investor meeting comes as the latest financial results show Target's shoppers remain cautious about spending on discretionary items as they are squeezed by inflation and high borrowing and credit card costs. The company reported its first annual decline in sales — 1.7% — in seven years.

Target delivered a 58% increase in fourth-quarter profits and handily beat Wall Street expectations as the retailer cut costs and

Image: Robyn Beck

Image: Mark Lennihan

maintained a lean inventory during the critical holiday season.

Revenue rose slightly in the latest quarter from a year ago and also topped projections. But comparable sales — those from stores or digital channels operating at least 12 months — slipped 4.4%. The declines, however, slowed compared with the 4.9% drop in the third quarter and 5.4% drop in the second.

Target offered a cautious outlook on sales and profits, indicating that sales won't rebound quickly. Still, investors liked the overall news, pushing up shares by more than 12% in afternoon trading.

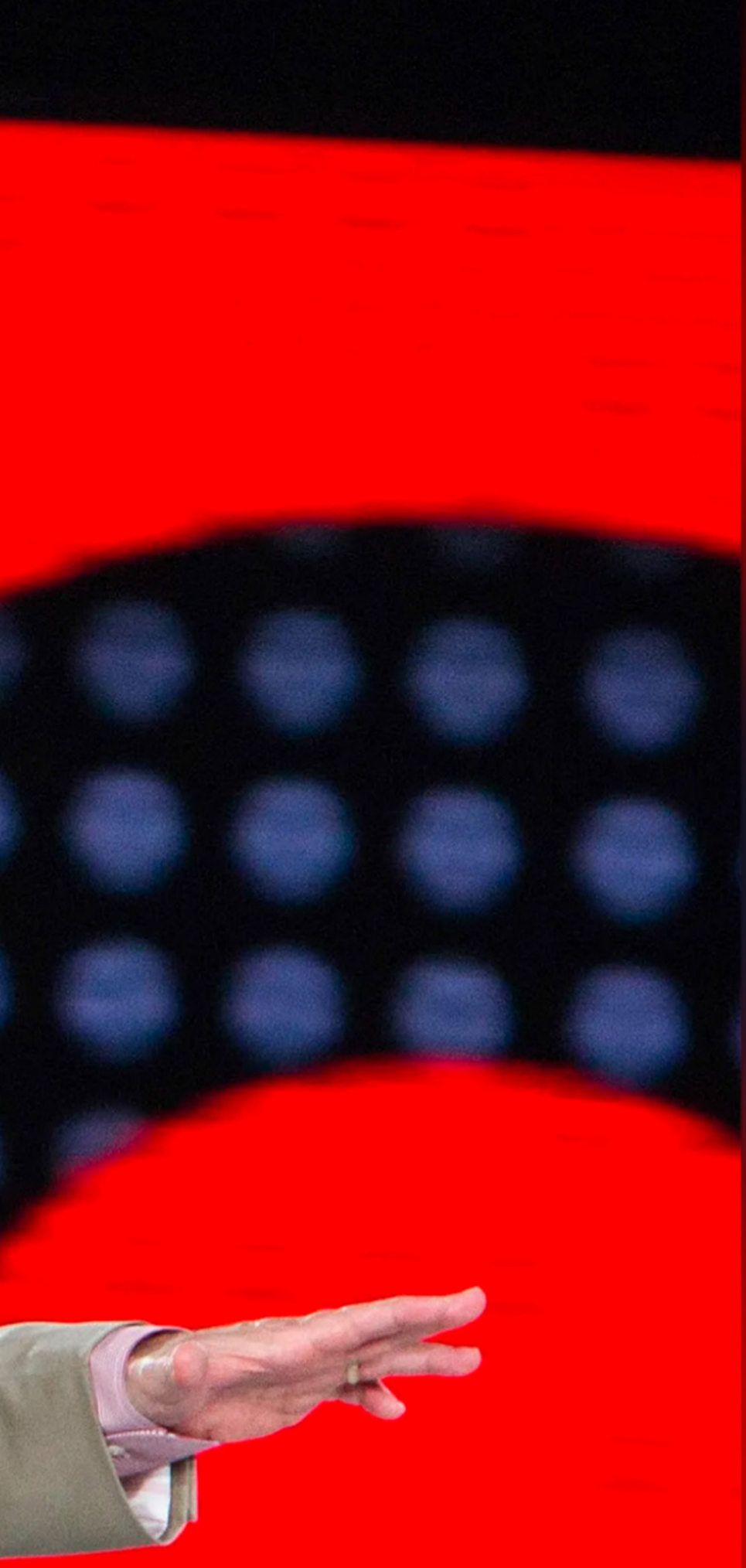
"This is a unique moment to clarify our roadmap for growth," Target's CEO Brian Cornell told investors at the meeting in Manhattan. "We are going to be razor-focused on taking market share."

Target is more vulnerable than Walmart and other big box discounters. More than half of its annual sales come from discretionary items like toys, fashion and electronic gadgets, things that many Americans have pulled back on buying.

But Target has also stumbled because of its own mistakes. For several quarters, it had to right its inventory levels after being burdened with heavily stocked warehouses in the summer of 2022. The inventory glut forced it to discount heavily to clear out those goods.

Target has been trying to strike the right balance between offering good value while also infusing its stores with trendy goods. Last month, the retailer launched a new collection called Dealworthy which features nearly 400 everyday basics starting at less than $1, with

Image: Courtney Perry



most items under $10. They include clothing and accessories, home items and electronics.

At the same time, Target's deal, struck last year, with designer Kendra Scott to offer exclusive collections of earrings, necklaces has resonated with shoppers. So has its new kitchenware brand under the discounter's own label Figmint.

As for its loyalty programs, Target said it saw a need to make its free Target Circle program easier to use. So members will see deals applied automatically at checkout so they don't have to search for or add individual offers.

Target also renamed its Target RedCard credit card program to Target Circle to make it easier for credit card holders to access Target Circle benefits like an extra 5% discount instantly on top of the Target Circle deals. It's also allowing credit cardholders to get an extra 30 days to return an item on top of the regular 90-day window.

In comparison, an Amazon Prime membership, launched in 2005, now costs $15 a month or $139 annually and includes free streaming of its Amazon Video, among other perks. Meanwhile, Walmart launched its paid membership program called Walmart Plus in 2020 - members get free shipping for $12.95 per month or $98 per year.

Cara Sylvester, Target's chief guest experience officer, told investors it was considering a number of perks to add to the paid program, but she said they were going to listen to what shoppers want.

When asked how Target could compete with Amazon's Prime Membership juggernaut, Cornell told The Associated Press that "it's not

like we're starting from scratch." He noted the company is tapping into the "power of Target brand and the Target Circle brand."

Target reported net income of $1.38 billion, or $2.98 per share, for the three-month period ended Feb. 3. That compared with $876 million, or $1.89 per share, for the year-ago period. The bottom-line results for the latest quarter well surpassed estimates of $2.42 per share, according to FactSet.

Revenue rose 1.7% to $31.92 billion, above projections of $31.83 billion.

Traffic for both stores and online combined fell 1.7% during the latest quarter, but that was an improvement from the 4.1% drop in the third quarter.

For the current quarter, Target expects a comparable sales decline of 3% to 5%. Analysts are expecting a 3.6% drop, according to FactSet. It forecast adjusted earning per share to be in the range or $1.70 to $2.10. Analysts expect $2.08 per share.

For the full year, Target anticipates comparable sales unchanged to up 2%. Adjusted earnings per share should range from $8.60 to $9.60, Target said. Analysts are expecting $9.15 per share, according to FactSet.

Target's shares rose $18.38 to $168.88 after the announcement.

Image: Jim Young

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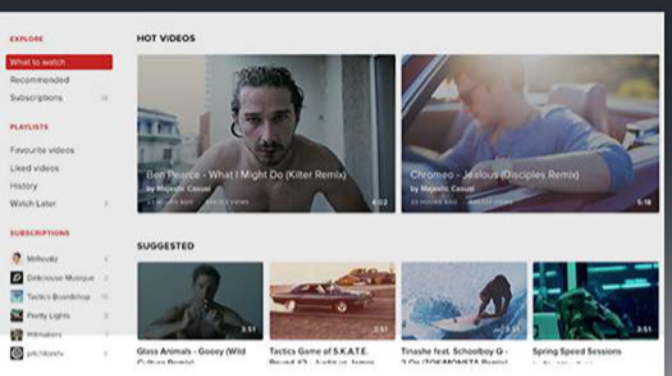

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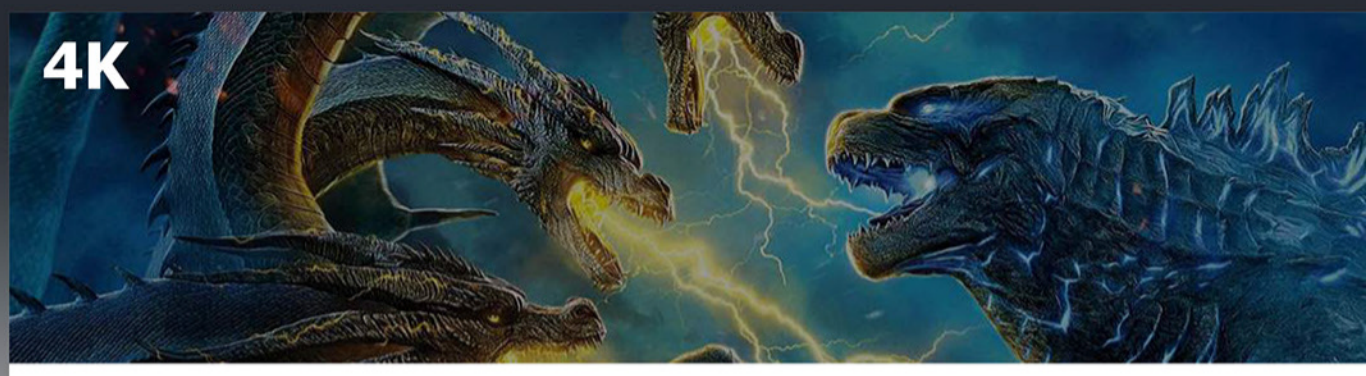

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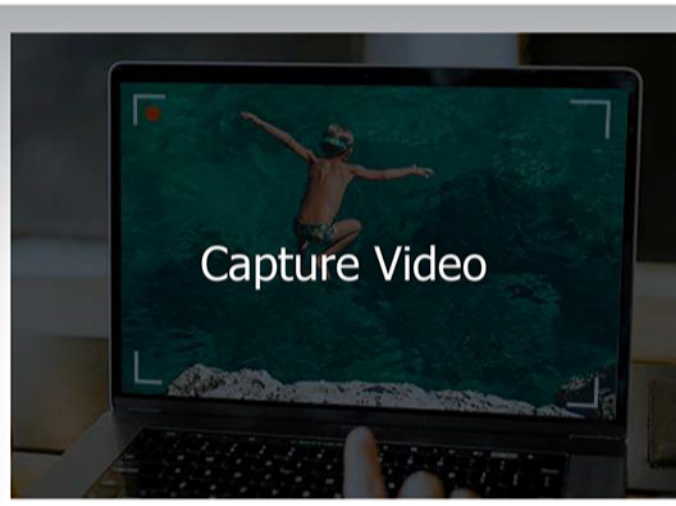

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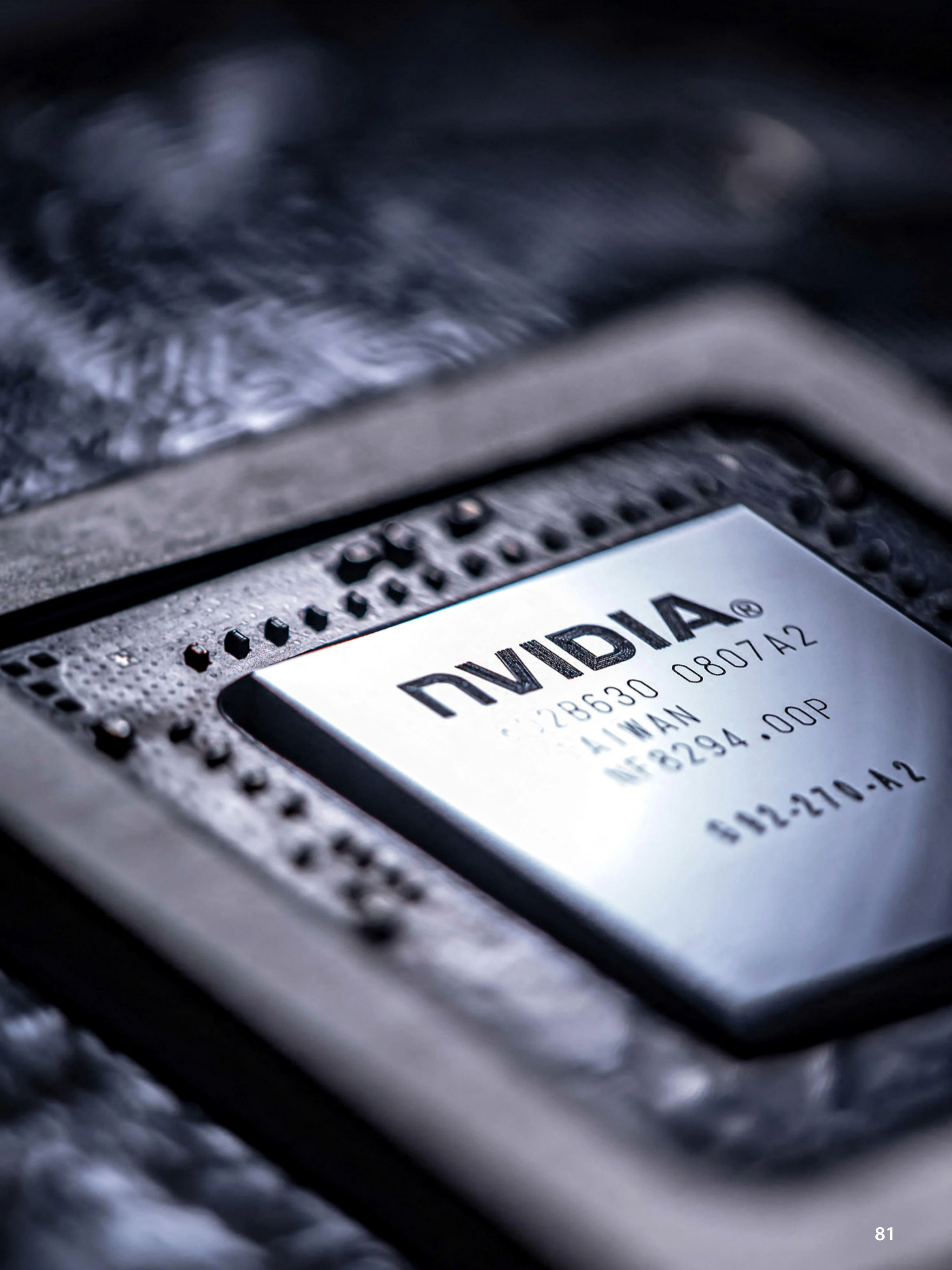
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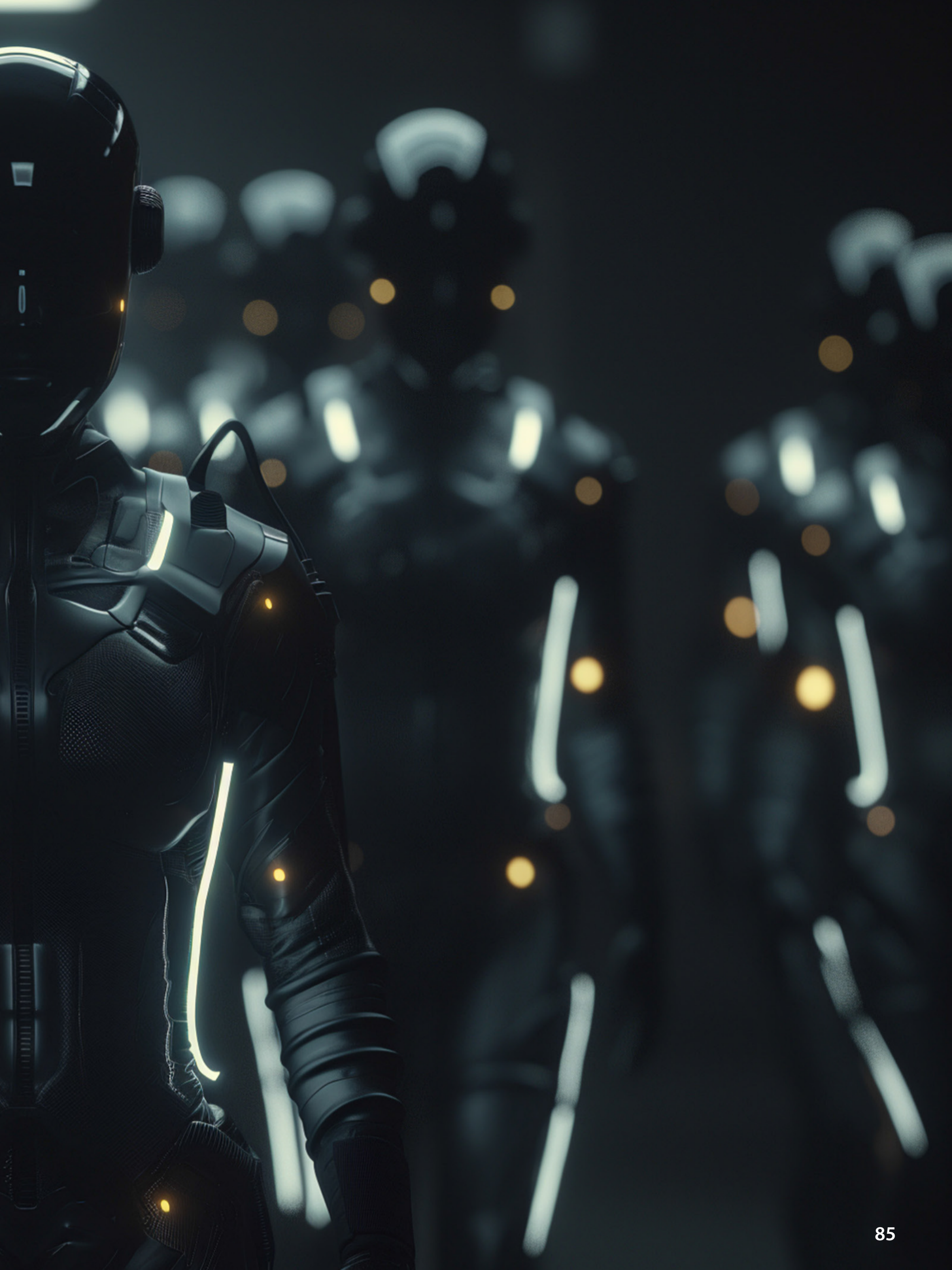
In the Age of AI, one company has risen to prominence as a pivotal force in the artificial intelligence race: Nvidia. The American firm has reaped immense benefits from the AI boom, with its share price skyrocketing by almost 450% since January 2023. But what's next?

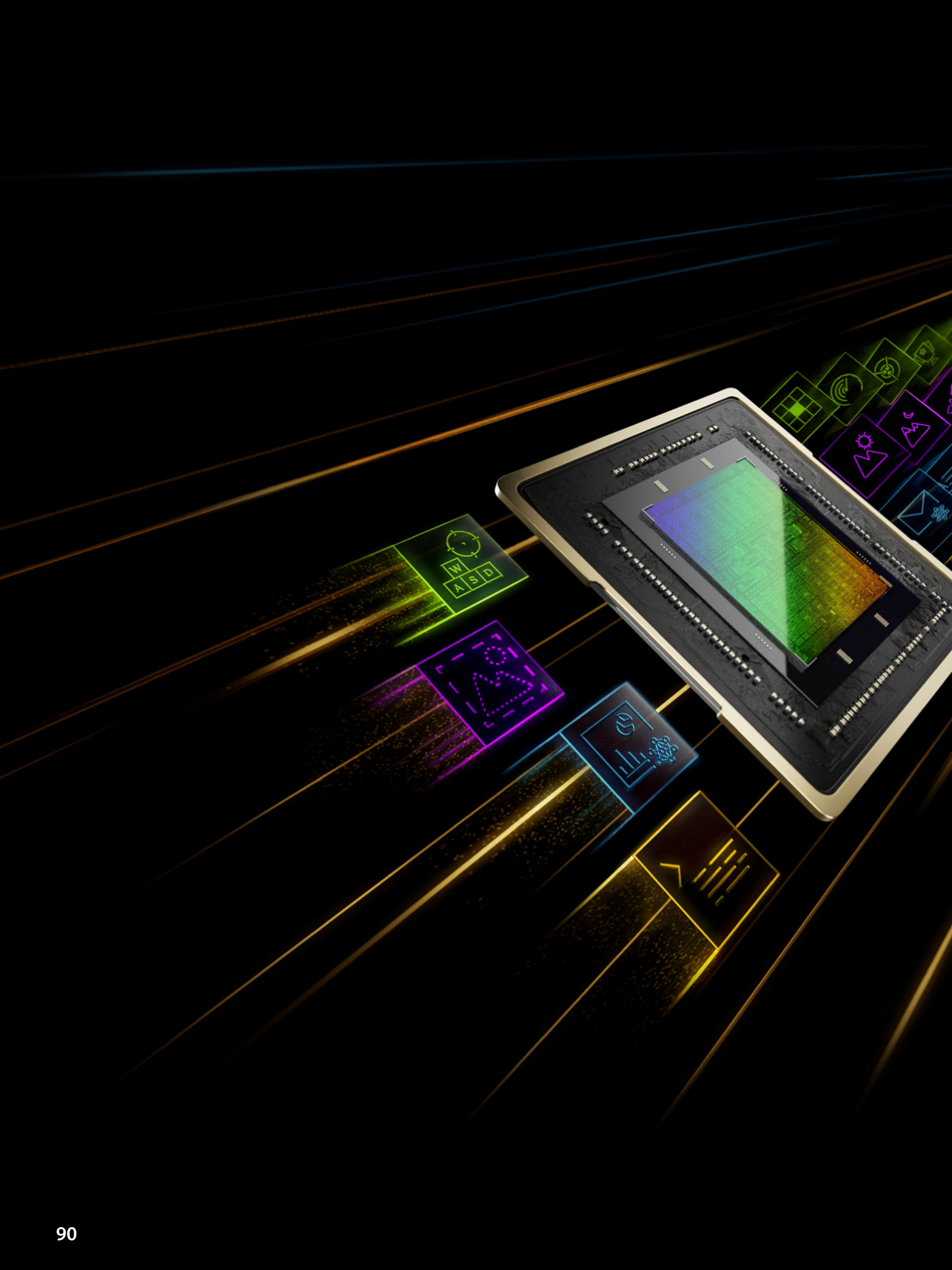


A RUNAWAY SUCCESS

Following a boom in artificial intelligence, **Nvidia's market capitalization has topped the $2 trillion mark** positioning it as the third most valuable company in the United States, trailing only behind tech giants Microsoft and Apple. Nvidia's financial performance is a testament to its dominance in the AI industry. **The company reported revenues of $22 billion** in the most recent quarter, a substantial leap from $6 billion in the corresponding period the previous year. Given Nvidia's commanding market share of over 95% in the specialist AI chips sector, this growth trajectory is not expected to slow down anytime soon.

Initially designed for video gaming, Nvidia's graphics processing units (GPUs) or "accelerators" have found a broader application base, extending to cryptocurrency mining, autonomous vehicles, and AI model training. These GPUs excel in parallel processing, enabling rapid computation by dividing tasks into smaller segments and distributing them across multiple cores. This capability is crucial for AI's deep learning processes, particularly in training artificial neural networks. Demand for chips is so high that the company's **co-founder and CEO Jensen Huang recently admitted it was allocating them 'fairly'.** And the growth shows no signs of slowing. Indeed, last month, for example, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg revealed that his company intends to buy **more than 350,000 of Nvidia's H100 GPUs by the end of the year** a statement that suggests it will spend billions of dollars on the chipmaker's products. Other firms like Microsoft and OpenAI will no doubt have similar-sized orders.

NVIDIA
Meta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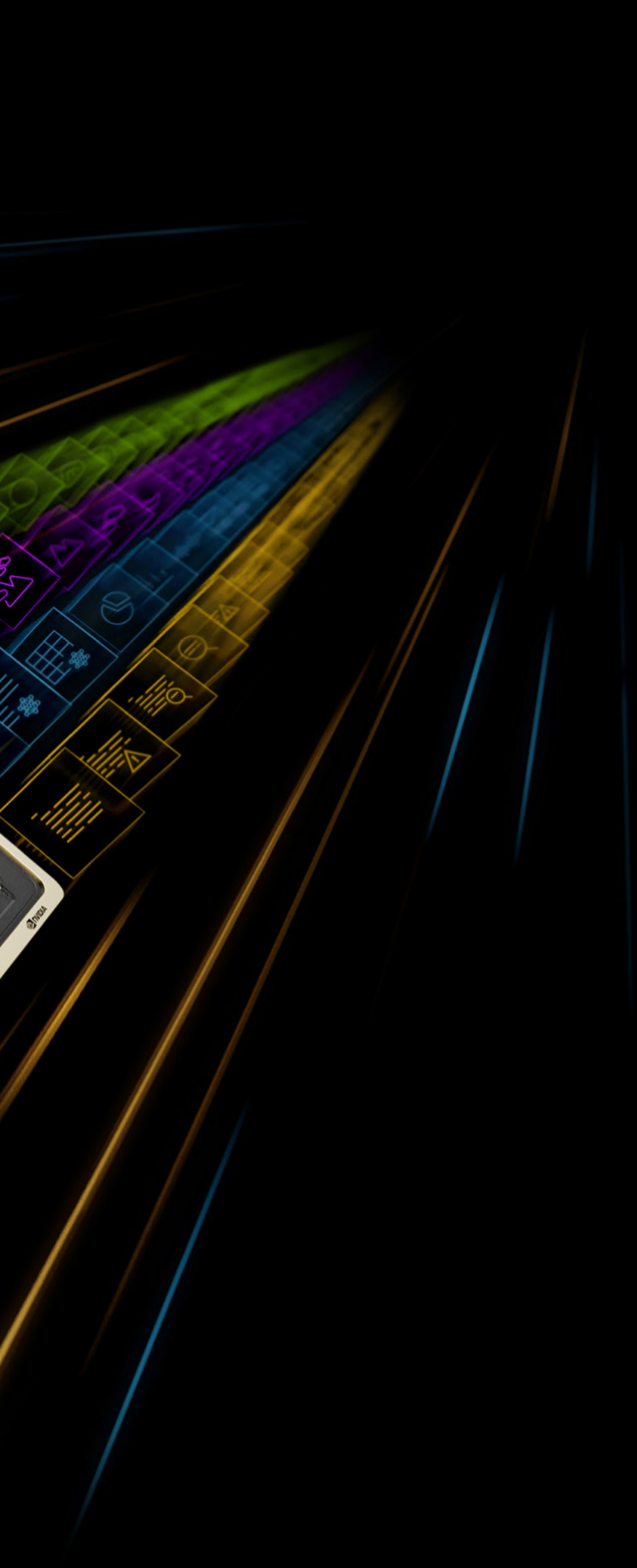
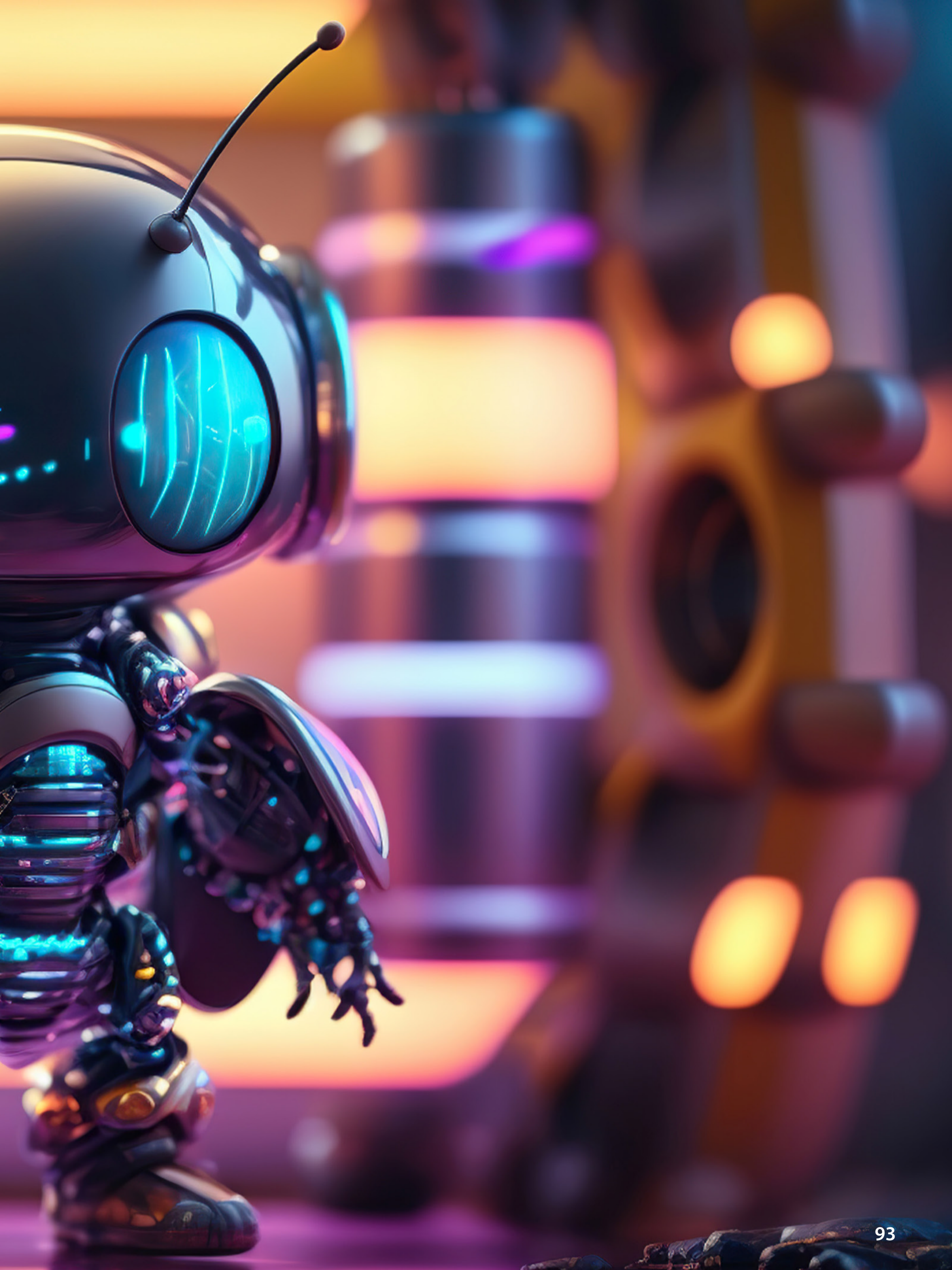


AN EXCITING FUTURE

Nvidia's edge isn't confined to hardware alone. The company's networking prowess, bolstered by the acquisition of Mellanox in 2019, allows it to connect thousands of GPUs, enhancing data center performance significantly. Nvidia's CUDA software platform has also become the industry standard, enabling developers to optimize AI applications effectively.

Despite Nvidia's dominance, **competitors are emerging.** Companies like **Amazon and Alphabet are developing their AI chips,** while other established chipmakers and startups vie for a share of Nvidia's market. Advanced Micro Devices (AMD) **recently introduced a chip that rivals Nvidia's power offerings.** And with high demand and unit availability falling, companies are paying over the odds for the technology. So much so that new players are considering designing and building their own units, too. OpenAI, for example, owner of ChatGPT, has revealed it's **exploring making artificial intelligence chips and has gone as far as evaluating a potential acquisition target** The firm's CEO Sam Altman has already **publicly complained about the scarcity,** is slowing down its progress. Currently, ChatGPT uses around 10,000 Nvidia graphics processing units (GPUs), and each query costs the company approximately 4 cents. If queries grow to even a tenth of the scale of Google search, the initial investment in GPUs would be around $48.1 billion, with annual maintenance costs at about $16 billion. By creating custom AI chips, OpenAI would join the likes of Google and Amazon. However, manufacturing custom chips would be a significant strategic shift for OpenAI and



NVIDIA

represent a substantial financial investment. The more likely path ahead is acquiring an existing chip firm to speed up the process, **much like Amazon's acquisition of Annapurna Labs.** However, overcoming Nvidia's triad of advantages—superior chips, networking, and software—remains a formidable challenge and will likely see the company ahead for many years to come. Indeed, the firm **could well become the world's biggest brand by 2024 end** as demand for chips continues apace. 17 brokerages have raised their price targets for Nvidia, and **one has even predicted that the company could reach a $3 trillion market** capitalization in the next year, cementing its position in the tech world.

GROWTH AHEAD

Nvidia's journey began in 1993, focusing on programmable chips for various applications. Over the years, its GPUs have become integral to various industries, from gaming consoles to vehicle driver-assistance systems. Partnerships with companies like Google and the surge in remote work during the pandemic have further amplified Nvidia's role in the tech landscape. Nvidia's discrete GPUs, optimized for parallel computing, are at the forefront of the AI revolution. Their efficiency in handling AI software programming has established Nvidia as a critical player in the tech ecosystem, with major companies relying on its technology. The firm's recent financial results, which exceeded market expectations, underscore the growing demand for accelerated computing and generative AI, affirming Nvidia's central role in this technological upheaval.

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Nvidia's ascendancy in the AI domain is not just a result of its technological innovations but its strategic positioning and adaptation to the evolving digital landscape. As AI continues to permeate various sectors, Nvidia's contributions and leadership in the field will undoubtedly remain instrumental - and shareholders will undoubtedly enjoy many positive growth periods!

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MADONNA IS AMONG THE EARLY ADOPTERS OF AI'S NEXT WAVE

Whenever Madonna sings the 1980s hit "La Isla Bonita" on her concert tour, moving images of swirling, sunset-tinted clouds play on the giant arena screens behind her.

To get that ethereal look, the pop legend embraced a still-uncharted branch of generative artificial intelligence – the text-to-video tool. Type some words — say, "surreal cloud sunset" or "waterfall in the jungle at dawn" — and an instant video is made.

Following in the footsteps of AI chatbots and still image-generators, some AI video enthusiasts say the emerging technology could one day upend entertainment, enabling you to choose your own movie with customizable story lines and endings. But there's a long way to go before they can do that, and plenty of ethical pitfalls on the way.

For early adopters like Madonna, who's long pushed art's boundaries, it was more of an experiment. She nixed an earlier version of "La Isla Bonita" concert visuals that used more conventional computer graphics to evoke a tropical mood.

"We tried CGI. It looked pretty bland and cheesy and she didn't like it," said Sasha Kasiuha, content director for Madonna's Celebration Tour that continues through late April. "And then we decided to try AI."

ChatGPT-maker OpenAI gave a glimpse of what sophisticated text-to-video technology might look like when the company recently showed off Sora, a new tool that's not yet publicly available. Madonna's team tried a different product from New York-based startup Runway, which helped pioneer the technology by releasing its first public text-to-video model last

March. The company released a more advanced "Gen-2" version in June.

Runway CEO Cristóbal Valenzuela said while some see these tools as a "magical device that you type a word and somehow it conjures exactly what you had in your head," the most effective approaches are by creative professionals looking for an upgrade to the decades-old digital editing software they're already using.

He said Runway can't yet make a full-length documentary. But it could help fill in some background video, or b-roll — the supporting shots and scenes that help tell the story.

"That saves you perhaps like a week of work," Valenzuela said. "The common thread of a lot of use cases is people use it as a way of augmenting or speeding up something they could have done before."

Runway's target customers are "large streaming companies, production companies, post-production companies, visual effects companies, marketing teams, advertising companies. A lot of folks that make content for a living," Valenzuela said.

Dangers await. Without effective safeguards, AI video-generators could threaten democracies with convincing "deepfake" videos of things that never happened, or — as is already the case with AI image generators — flood the internet with fake pornographic scenes depicting what appear to be real people with recognizable faces. Under pressure from regulators, major tech companies have promised to watermark AI-generated outputs to help identify what's real.

There also are copyright disputes brewing about the video and image collections the AI systems are being trained upon (neither Runway nor OpenAI discloses its data sources) and to what extent they are unfairly replicating trademarked works. And there are fears that, at some point, video-making machines could replace human jobs and artistry.

For now, the longest AI-generated video clips are still measured in seconds, and can feature jerky movements and telltale glitches such as distorted hands and fingers. Fixing that is "just a question of more data and more training," and the computing power on which that training depends, said Alexander Waibel, a computer science professor at Carnegie Mellon University who's been researching AI since the 1970s.

"Now I can say, 'Make me a video of a rabbit dressed as Napoleon walking through New York City,'" Waibel said. "It knows what New York City looks like, what a rabbit looks like, what Napoleon looks like."

Which is impressive, he said, but still far from crafting a compelling storyline.

Before it released its first-generation model last year, Runway's claim to AI fame was as a co-developer of the image-generator Stable Diffusion. Another company, London-based Stability AI, has since taken over Stable Diffusion's development.

The underlying "diffusion model" technology behind most leading AI generators of images and video works by mapping noise, or random data, onto images, effectively destroying an original image and then predicting what a new one should look like. It borrows an idea from physics that can

be used to describe, for instance, how gas diffuses outward.

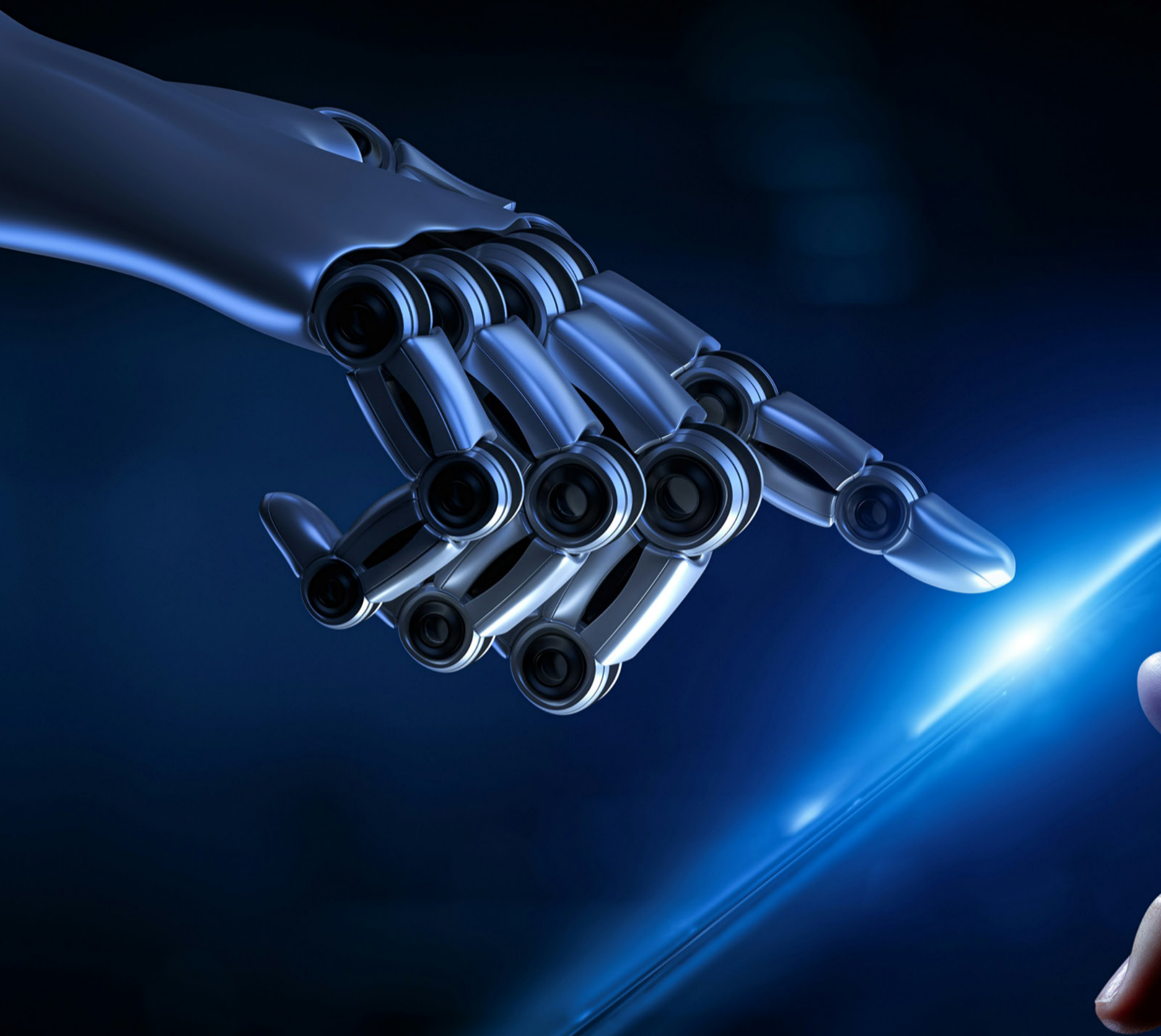
"What diffusion models do is they reverse that process," said Phillip Isola, an associate professor of computer science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "They kind of take the randomness and they congeal it back into the volume. That's the way of going from randomness to content. And that's how you can make random videos."

Generating video is more complicated than still images because it needs to take into account temporal dynamics, or how elements within the video change over time and across sequences of frames, said Daniela Rus, another MIT professor who directs its Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory.

Rus said the computing resources required are "significantly higher than for still image generation" because "it involves processing and generating multiple frames for each second of video."

That's not stopping some well-heeled tech companies from trying to keep outdoing each other in showing off higher-quality AI video generation at longer durations. Requiring written descriptions to make an image was just the start. Google recently demonstrated a new project called Genie that can be prompted to transform a photograph or even a sketch into "an endless variety" of explorable video game worlds.

In the near term, AI-generated videos will likely show up in marketing and educational content, providing a cheaper alternative to producing original footage or obtaining stock videos, said Aditi Singh, a researcher at



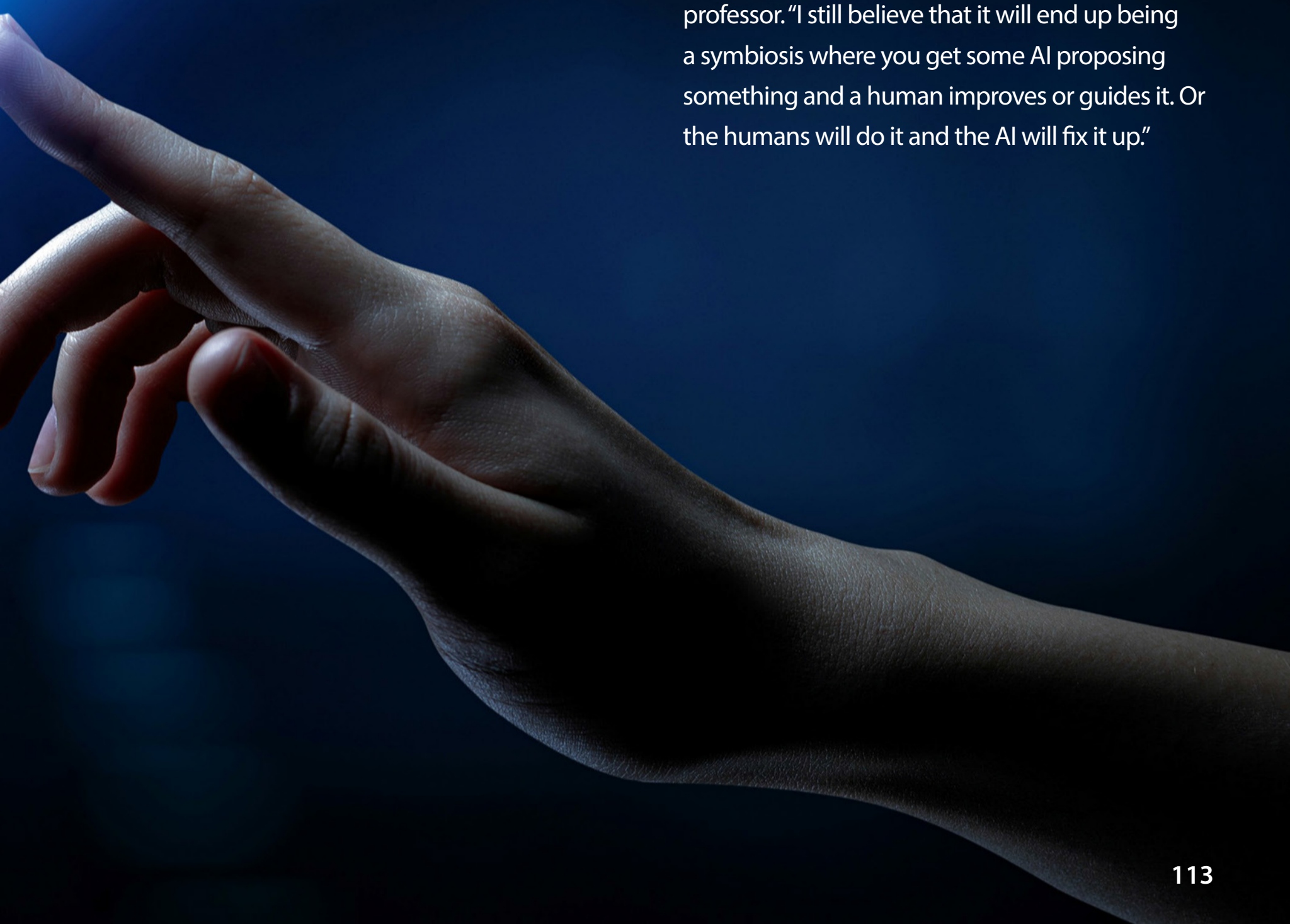
Cleveland State University who has surveyed the text-to-video market.

When Madonna first talked to her team about AI, the "main intention wasn't, 'Oh, look, it's an AI video,'" said Kasiuha, the creative director.

"She asked me, 'Can you just use one of those AI tools to make the picture more crisp, to make sure it looks current and looks high resolution?'" Kasiuha said. "She loves when you bring in new technology and new kinds of visual elements."

Longer AI-generated movies are already being made. Runway hosts an annual AI film festival to showcase such works. But whether that's what human audiences will choose to watch remains to be seen.

"I still believe in humans," said Waibel, the CMU professor. "I still believe that it will end up being a symbiosis where you get some AI proposing something and a human improves or guides it. Or the humans will do it and the AI will fix it up."



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INTRODUCING THE M3 MACBOOK AIR: A LEAP FORWARD WITH 3-NANOMETER PROCESSOR

In a significant update to its laptop lineup, Apple introduced the new 14-inch and 16-inch MacBook Pro models equipped with the advanced M3 chipsets in October 2023, signaling a major step forward in computing power. Following this, Apple has now expanded the M3 technology to its MacBook Air series, announcing the release of the updated 13-inch and 15-inch MacBook Air models.

These updated versions, now available for order, are set to bring considerable enhancements in performance, thanks to the inclusion of the M3 chip.

Despite no external modifications to the MacBook Air's design, which underwent a major redesign two years prior, the internal upgrades are where these new models shine. The M3 chip, developed on a cutting-edge 3-nanometer process, offers a notable increase in speed and energy efficiency by fitting more transistors into a compact area.

Image: Dado Ruvic

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This technological advancement brings significant improvements, including up to 35 percent faster CPU performance and up to 65 percent enhanced GPU performance compared to its M1 predecessor. This makes the M3 MacBook Air a robust choice for a range of tasks from basic computing needs to light gaming, courtesy of its 8-core CPU and up to 10-core GPU configuration.

A key update with the M3 MacBook Air is the added support for dual external displays, a feature that previously was limited to a single monitor in both the M1 and M2 MacBook models. This improvement is aimed at users seeking expanded screen real estate, although it requires the laptop to be in clamshell mode for this functionality. Additionally, the new MacBook Air models boast Wi-Fi 6E capability, offering significantly faster download speeds than those equipped with the M2 chip.

Image: Nina Riggio

3-Nanometer: M3, M3 Pro, and M3 Max are the first chips for a personal computer built using the industry-leading 3-nanometer technology. With a faster, more efficient next-generation GPU, these chips deliver the biggest leap forward in graphics architecture ever for Apple silicon.

Both the 13-inch and 15-inch MacBook Air variants come standard with the M3 chip, offering options for an 8-core or 10-core GPU for the 13-inch model, while the 15-inch model is available only with a 10-core GPU. The base configurations include 8 gigabytes of unified memory and 256 gigabytes of storage, with options to upgrade to up to 24 gigabytes of unified memory and 2 terabytes of storage. Customers can choose from four color options: Midnight, Starlight, Space Gray, and Silver.

While it remains to be seen how these new models perform in real-world scenarios, the choice between the 13-inch and 15-inch MacBook Air largely depends on individual preference. The 13-inch model is recommended for most users due to its portability and performance, ideal for everyday tasks. On the other hand, the 15-inch model, offering the same performance in a larger format, is better suited for those who prefer a bigger screen for extended work sessions without relying on an external monitor.

For budget-conscious buyers, the M2-powered 13-inch MacBook Air remains a viable option, now available at a reduced price of $999, offering substantial savings without compromising on performance for users not requiring the latest chipset. Although the M2-powered 15-inch MacBook Air is no longer sold directly by Apple, it may still be a worthwhile purchase through third-party retailers following a price reduction.

The introduction of the M3 chip across the MacBook Air and Pro lines signifies Apple's commitment to pushing the boundaries of laptop performance. With these latest releases,

Image: Taan Huyn

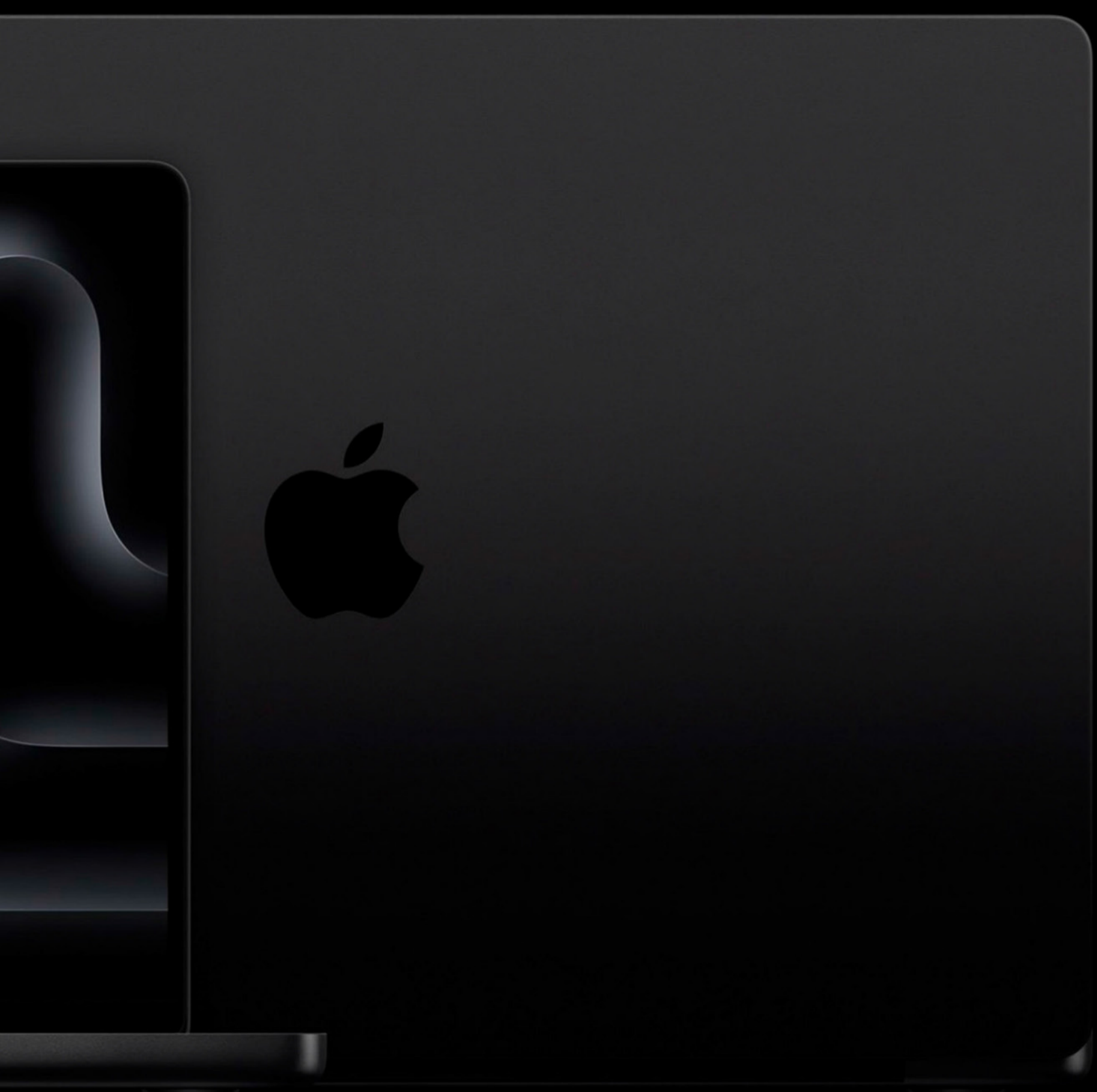
Apple not only enhances the computing experience with improved speed and efficiency but also addresses user demands for increased functionality, such as multi-display support, highlighting the company's ongoing innovation in the tech landscape.

M3 MACBOOK AIR AS PREMIER AI COMPUTER

The unveiling of the M3 MacBook Air comes with a standout declaration, identifying the computer as the "world's best consumer laptop for AI." This bold claim is made in anticipation of the upcoming WWDC 2024 event, where Apple is expected to roll out a series of new artificial intelligence features across its various platforms.

In the press release detailing the launch, Apple emphasized the enhanced capabilities brought about by the transition to Apple silicon, which has made every Mac a formidable platform for AI. The inclusion of a more powerful 16-core Neural Engine in the M3 chip, coupled with accelerators in both the CPU and GPU, significantly boosts the on-device machine learning performance. These improvements position the MacBook Air at the pinnacle of consumer laptops for AI tasks.

Image: Raymond Wong



Apple also highlighted the integration of intelligent features within macOS, designed to augment both productivity and creativity for users. These include advanced camera functionalities, real-time speech-to-text conversion, translation, text predictions, visual understanding, and various accessibility features. The versatility of the MacBook Air is further showcased through its compatibility with an extensive ecosystem of apps that leverage advanced AI capabilities, enabling a wide range of activities from AI-assisted homework help in Goodnotes 6 to photo enhancement in Pixelmator Pro and background noise removal in videos via CapCut.

Moreover, the MacBook Air's unified memory architecture facilitates the running of optimized AI models, including large language models and diffusion models for image generation, directly on the device with impressive performance. The laptop also supports cloud-based AI solutions, empowering users to access powerful productivity and creative applications such as Microsoft Copilot for Microsoft 365, Canva, and Adobe Firefly.

Sales
Monthly Overview Team Performance and Pipe Impact
Top 10 Most Active Accounts
Top Reps with the Most Activities
Top 20 Customers with no Activity
Top Deals at Risk

Aster Novae
Week One Schedule
Day 1
Day 2
Day 3
Day 4
IT Setup
Login & Access Session
Security Best Practices
Workflow Overview
Orientation
Office Tour
Culture & Values Presentation
Benefits Info Meeting
Meet Your Team
Individual Meetings
Staff Lunch
Team-Building Activity
Aster Novae Landscape Architects
New Employee Manual
Francois Thibault
Liz Dizon

Image: Laurenz Heymann

Noteworthy is Apple's specific focus on AI in the MacBook Air press release, a departure from its previous communication strategy, such as the one observed during the announcement of the M3 MacBook Pro. While machine learning mentions are commonplace in Apple's press materials, the explicit reference to AI in this context is unusual and marks a significant emphasis on the technology.

Apple CEO Tim Cook has hinted at the company's forthcoming AI endeavors on several occasions, indicating a significant focus on generative AI technologies this year.

During the Q1 earnings call and a subsequent shareholder meeting, Cook suggested that Apple would soon unveil more details about its AI projects, including an enhanced version of Siri.

With WWDC 2024 on the horizon, the tech community eagerly awaits the comprehensive unveiling of Apple's AI strategy, anticipated to introduce innovative features that could redefine the consumer experience across Apple's device ecosystem.

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DODGE MUSCLE CARS LIVE ON WITH NEW VERSIONS OF THE CHARGER POWERED BY ELECTRICITY OR GASOLINE

America's muscle car culture is adapting to the new world of electric vehicles, but the gasoline-powered high-performance road beasts will be around for at least a few more years.

Dodge this week unveiled two battery-powered versions of the Charger muscle car that will still roar like a big V8 engine without pollution from the tailpipe.

However, the Stellantis brand, which has carved out a market niche of selling high-performance vehicles, will keep selling a gas-powered Charger as well, sans the big Hemi V8.

Both will be built on Stellantis' global large vehicle underpinnings, and the Windsor, Ontario, factory that will manufacture them will be able to flex between gasoline and electric depending on consumer demand. The flexibility will let Stellantis hedge its bets if electric vehicle sales take off or slow.

Last year Stellantis stopped making the gas powered Chargers and Challengers, and many thought that would be the beginning of the end for the thundering sedans.

But Dodge CEO Tim Kuniskis said there were hints that a gas version would live on. "It was always there. It was always in the plan. It was always coming," he said.

The company, however, downplayed the gas version as it showed off two-door and four-door electric models that look a little like Chargers of the 1960s with aerodynamic lines and hatchbacks instead of trunks.

The electric versions, named Charger Daytona after the NASCAR raceway in Florida, will come with two powertrains, one delivering up to 670

horsepower with the ability to go from zero to 60 miles per hour (97 kilometers per hour) in 3.3 seconds. The other is no slouch with 496 horses and a zero to 60 time of 4.7 seconds.

Dodge claims the high-performance electric version is world's quickest and most powerful muscle car. An even higher-performance version is coming next year.

The 496-horsepower Daytona is expected to have a range of 317 miles (510 kilometers) per charge, while the high-performance version can go 260 miles 418 kilometers).

Both will have the company's Fratzonic Chambered Exhaust that sends air through chamber to simulate the roar of a V8.

Both are heavy due to the big batteries, each with gross vehicle weights of more than three tons.

The new gas-powered Charger Sixpack will look similar to the electric versions and be powered by a new 3-liter six-cylinder engine with two turbochargers. Standard versions will put out 420 horsepower while a high-output engine will have 550.

The company says the new engine will make more horsepower and produce more torque than the outgoing 5.7-liter and 6.4-liter Hemi V8s. Company officials said they haven't completed fuel economy tests on the new engine in the Charger yet.

All versions have all-wheel-drive but can be switched to rear-drive so owners can still do burnouts and drifting. There will be options that set the cars up for the racetrack.

Production of the two-door coupe Daytona

ELLANTIS

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versions is expected to start this summer, while the electric four-door and gas-powered versions will start early next year.

Kuniskis said he's not sure which versions will sell better, electric or gas. With federal tax incentives on electric vehicles, there likely will be very attractive lease payments that could sway some buyers, he said.

The company almost certainly will be criticized by environmental groups for coming out with EVs that emphasize performance over efficiency and for keeping the gas powered muscle car.

But Kuniskis said under normal circumstances, about 17 million new vehicles are sold in the U.S. each year. "You know what? People need choices," he said.

Kuniskis said he would expect criticism if Dodge hadn't come out with an electric version of the Charger. "It's designed for performance and it has low range, but it's still a battery electric vehicle. They're going to hate on that? Seems kind of odd."

HUMANOID ROBOT-MAKER FIGURE PARTNERS WITH OPENAI AND GETS BACKING FROM JEFF BEZOS AND TECH GIANTS

ChatGPT-maker OpenAI is looking to fuse its artificial intelligence systems into the bodies of humanoid robots as part of a new deal with robotics startup Figure.

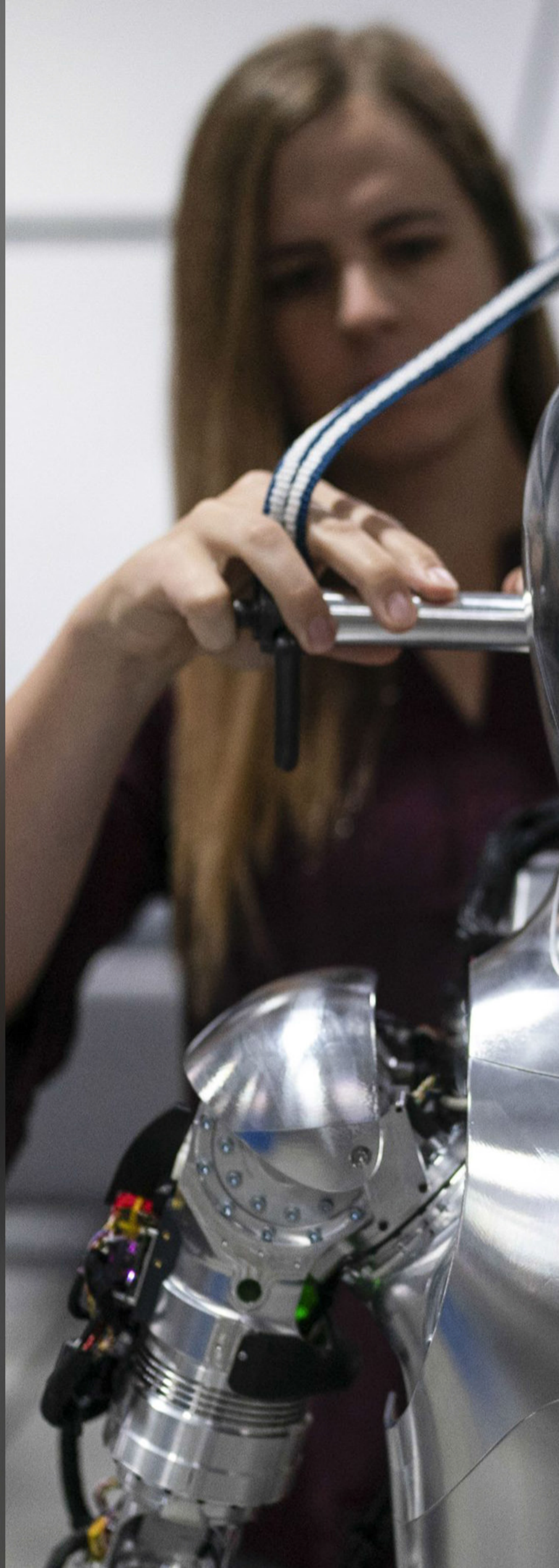
Sunnyvale, California-based Figure announced the partnership along with $675 million in venture capital funding from a group that includes Amazon founder Jeff Bezos as well as Microsoft, chipmaker Nvidia and the startup-funding divisions of Intel and OpenAI.

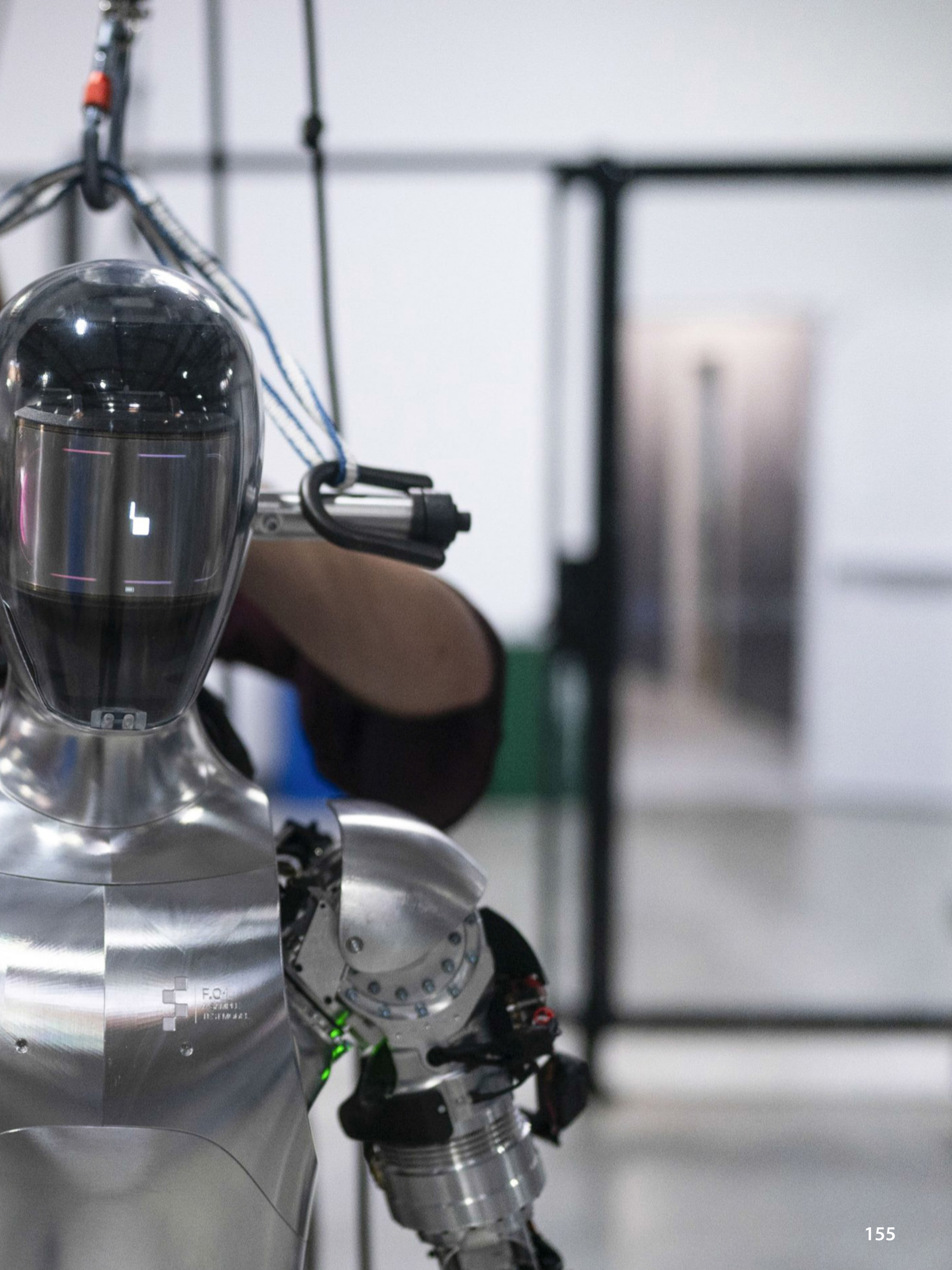
Figure is less than two years old and doesn't have a commercial product but is persuading influential tech industry backers to support its vision of shipping billions of human-like robots to the world's workplaces and homes.

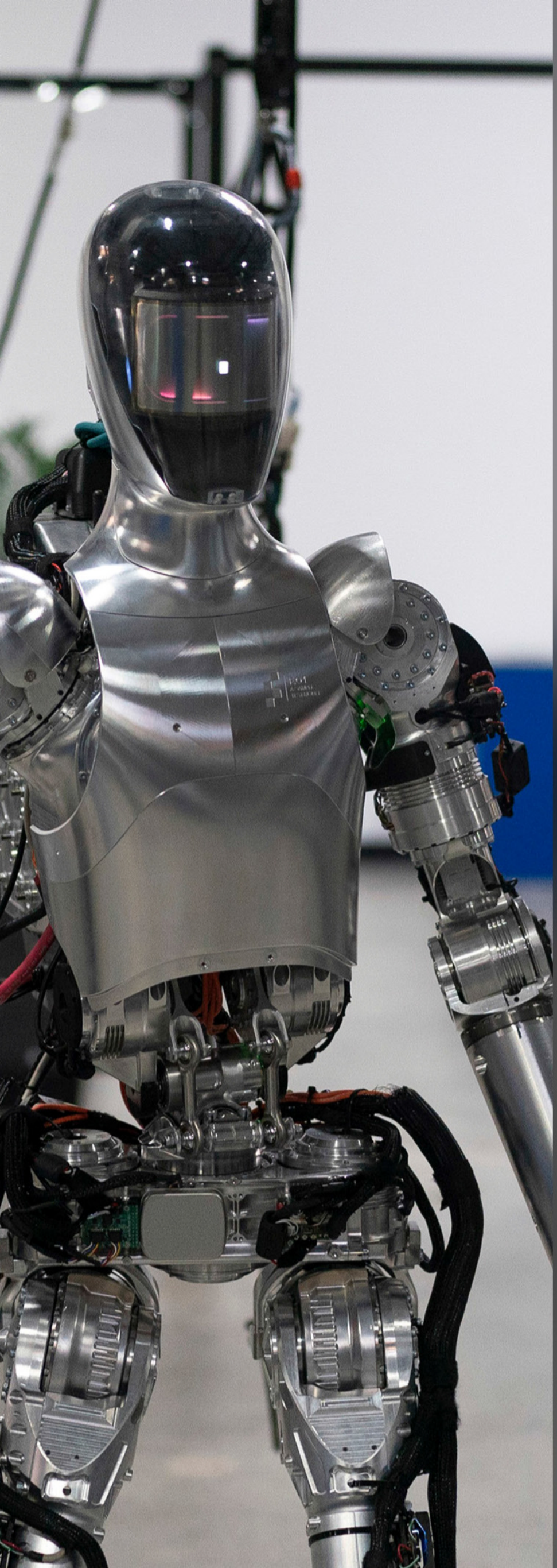
"If we can just get humanoids to do work that humans are not wanting to do because there's a shortfall of humans, we can sell millions of humanoids, billions maybe," Figure CEO Brett Adcock told last year.

For OpenAI, which dabbled in robotics research before pivoting to a focus on the AI large language models that power ChatGPT, the partnership will "open up new possibilities for how robots can help in everyday life," said Peter Welinder, the San Francisco company's vice president of product and partnerships, in a written statement.

Financial terms of the deal between Figure and OpenAI weren't disclosed. The collaboration will have OpenAI building specialized AI models for Figure's humanoid robots, likely based on OpenAI's existing technology such as GPT language models, the image-generator DALL-E and the new video-generator Sora.







That will help "accelerate Figure's commercial timeline" by enabling its robots to "process and reason from language," according to Figure's announcement. The company announced in January an agreement with BMW to put its robots to work at a car plant in Spartanburg, South Carolina, but hadn't yet determined exactly how or when they would be used.

Robotics experts differ on the usefulness of robots shaped in human form. Most robots employed in factory and warehouse tasks might have some animal-like features — a robotic arm, finger-like grippers or even legs — but aren't truly humanoid. That's in part because it's taken decades for robotics engineers to develop robots that can walk effectively on two legs or reliably manipulate small objects.

Whitney Rockley, co-founder and managing partner of Toronto-based venture capital firm McRock Capital, said she understands the appeal of humanoids because they're relatable, evoking emotions and starting conversations. In practice, however, she said they're still awkward and pose huge technical challenges, which is why she's sticking to investing in non-humanoid robots.

"We look at robotics and automation really practically and say, 'What kind of timeline are we willing to commit to in order to really see commercial liftoff and deployments and applications?'" Rockley said. "And I think that the groups that are backing a lot of humanoid solutions right now, they're in there for the long haul, which is great because you need that, but it's going to take decades upon decades."

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman hinted at a renewed interest in robotics in a podcast hosted by

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates and released early this year in which Altman said the company was starting to invest in promising robotics hardware platforms after having earlier abandoned its own research.

"We started robots too early and so we had to put that project on hold," Altman told Gates, noting that "we were dealing with bad simulators and breaking tendons" that were distracting from the company's other work.

"We realized more and more over time that what we really first needed was intelligence and cognition and then we could figure out how we could adapt it to physicality," he said.

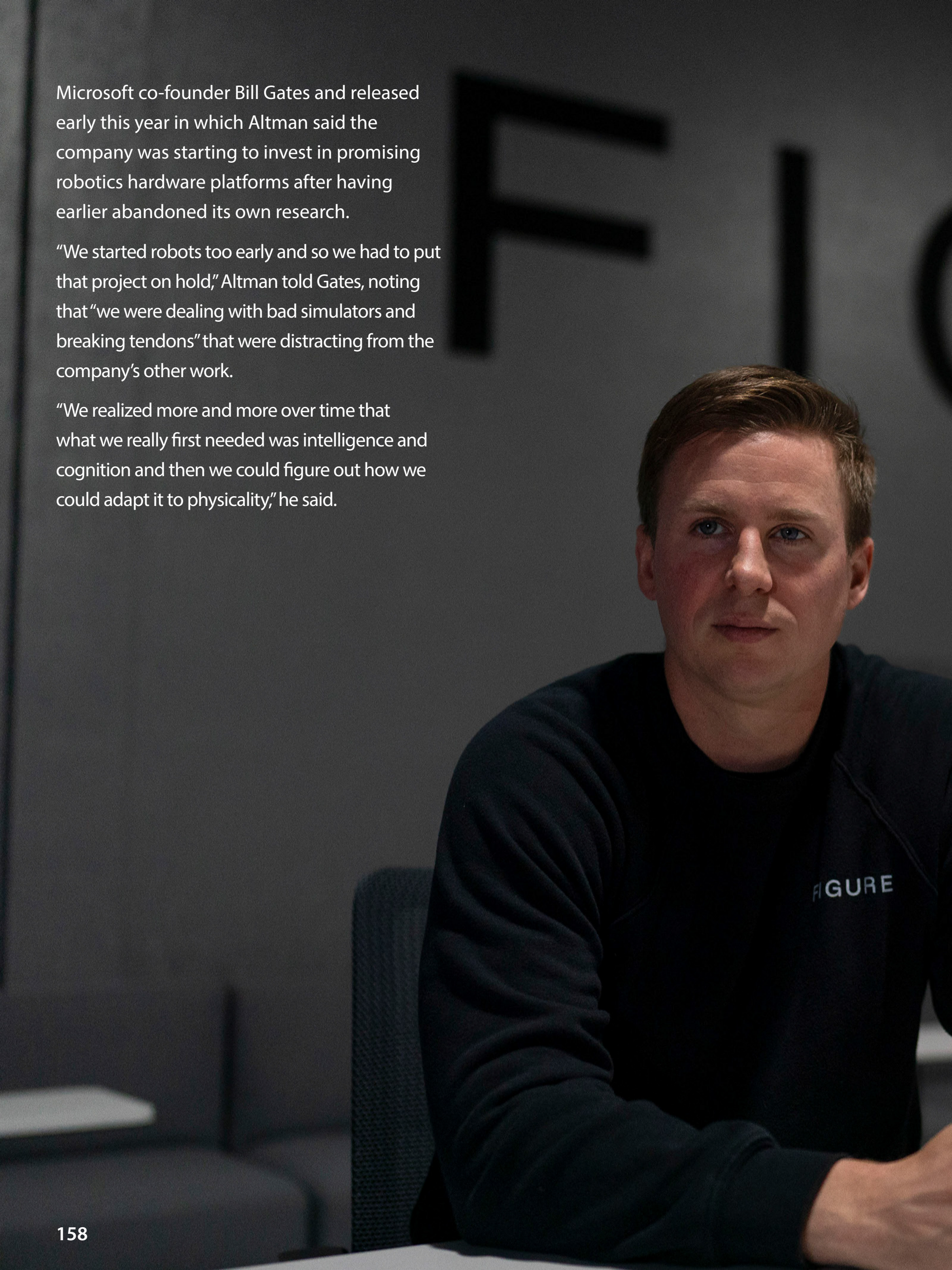


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Image: Kirsty Wigglesworth

ELON MUSK SUES OPENAI AND CEO SAM ALTMAN, CLAIMING BETRAYAL OF ITS GOAL TO BENEFIT HUMANITY

Elon Musk is suing OpenAI and its CEO Sam Altman over what he says is a betrayal of the ChatGPT maker's founding aims of benefiting humanity rather than pursuing profits.

In a lawsuit filed at San Francisco Superior Court, billionaire Musk said that when he bankrolled OpenAI's creation, he secured an agreement with Altman and Greg Brockman, the president, to keep the AI company as a nonprofit that would develop technology for the benefit of the public.

Under its founding agreement, OpenAI would also make its code open to the public instead of

walling it off for any private company's gains, the lawsuit says.

However, by embracing a close relationship with Microsoft, OpenAI and its top executives have set that pact "aflame" and are "perverting" the company's mission, Musk alleges in the lawsuit.

OpenAI declined to comment on the lawsuit.

"OpenAI, Inc. has been transformed into a closed-source de facto subsidiary of the largest technology company in the world: Microsoft," the lawsuit filed says. "Under its new Board, it is not just developing but is actually refining an AGI to maximize profits for Microsoft, rather than for the benefit of humanity."

AGI refers to artificial general intelligence, which are general purpose AI systems that can perform just as well as — or even better than — humans in a wide variety of tasks.

Musk is suing over breach of contract, breach of fiduciary duty and unfair business practices. He also wants an injunction to prevent anyone, including Microsoft, from benefiting from OpenAI's technology.

Those claims are unlikely to succeed in court but that might not be the point for Musk, who is getting his take and personal story on the record, said Anupam Chander, a law professor at Georgetown University.

"Partly there's an assertion of Elon's founding role in OpenAI and generative AI technology, in particular his claim he named OpenAI and he hired the key scientist and that he was the principal funder of its early years," Chander said. "In some sense it's a lawsuit that tries to establish his own place in the history of generative AI."

Musk was an early investor in OpenAI when it was founded in 2015 and co-chaired its board alongside Altman. In the lawsuit, he said he invested "tens of millions" of dollars in the nonprofit research laboratory.

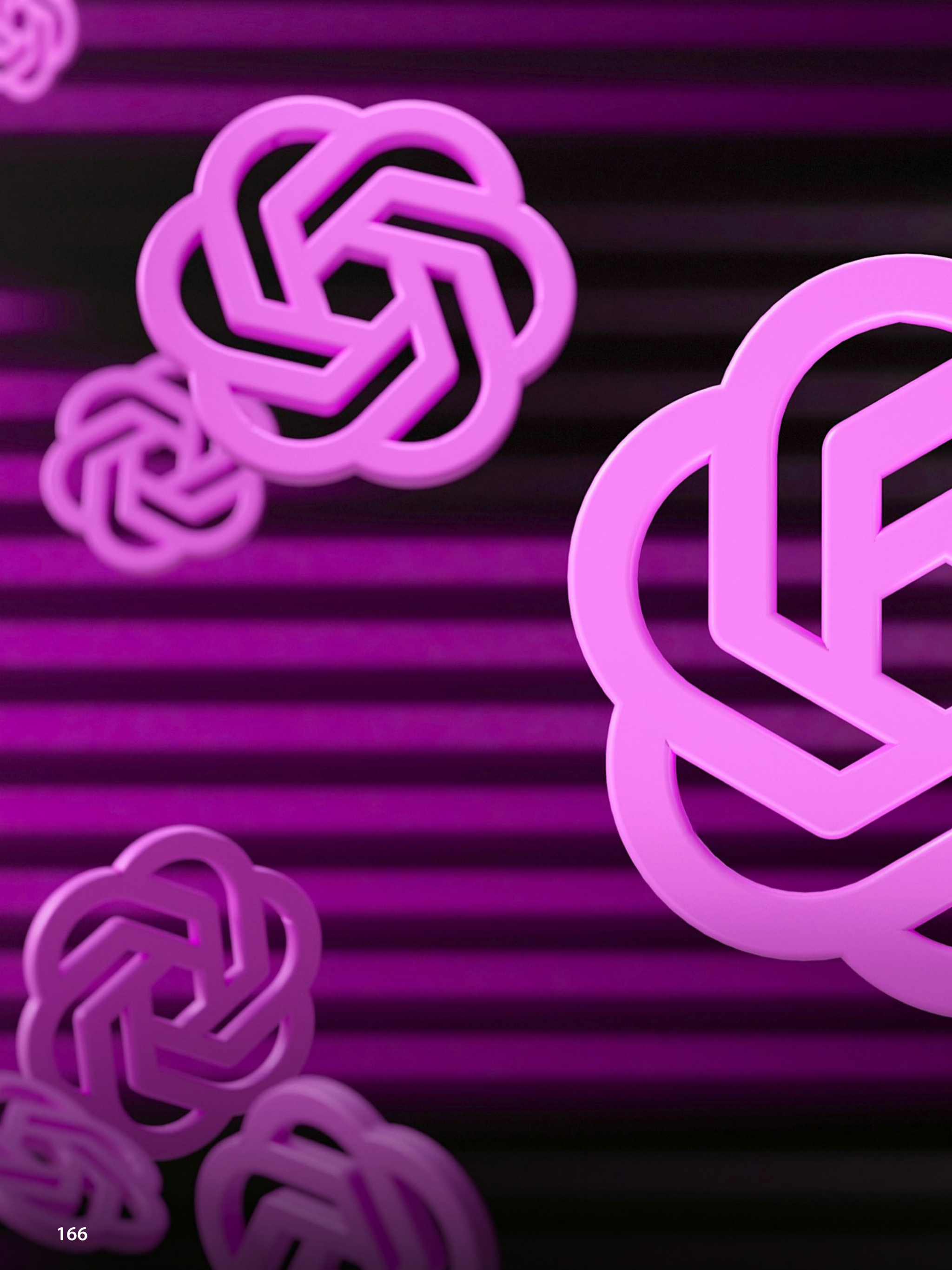
Musk resigned from the board in early 2018 in a move that OpenAI said at the time would prevent conflicts of interest as the Tesla CEO was recruiting AI talent to build self-driving technology at the electric car maker. "This will eliminate a potential future conflict for Elon," OpenAI said in a February 2018 blog post. Musk has since said he also had disagreements with the startup's direction, but he continued to donate to the nonprofit.

Later that year, OpenAI filed papers to incorporate a for-profit arm and began shifting most of its workforce to that business, but retained a nonprofit board of directors that governed the company. Microsoft made its first $1 billion investment in the company in 2019 and the next year, signed an agreement that gave the software giant exclusive rights to its AI models. That license is supposed to expire once OpenAI has achieved artificial general intelligence, the company has said.

Its unveiling of ChatGPT in late 2022 bought worldwide fame to OpenAI and helped spark a race by tech companies to capitalize on the public's fascination with the technology.

When the nonprofit board abruptly fired Altman as CEO late last year, for reasons that still haven't been fully disclosed, it was Microsoft that helped drive the push that brought Altman back as CEO and led most of the old board to resign. Musk's lawsuit alleged that those changes caused the

Image: Vitor Miranda



checks and balances protecting the nonprofit mission to "collapse overnight."

One of Musk's claims is that the directors of the nonprofit have failed to uphold their obligations to follow its mission, but Dana Brakman Reiser, a professor at Brooklyn Law School, is skeptical that Musk had standing to bring that claim.

"It would be very worrisome if every person who cared about or donated to a charity could suddenly sue their directors and officers to say, 'You're not doing what I think is the right thing to run this nonprofit,'" she said. In general, only other directors or an attorney general, for example, could bring that type of suit, she said.

Even if Musk invested in the for-profit business, his complaint seems to be that the organization is making too much profit in contradiction to its mission, which includes making its technology publicly available.

"I care about nonprofits actually following the mission that they set out and not being captured for some kind for profit purpose. That is a real concern," Brakman Reiser said. "Whether Elon Musk is the person to raise that claim, I'm less sure."

Whatever the legal merits of the claims, a brewing courtroom fight between Musk, who now has his own AI startup, and Altman could offer the public a peek into the internal debates and decision-making at OpenAI, though the company's lawyers will likely fight to keep some of those documents confidential.

"The discovery will be epic," posted venture capitalist Chamath Palihapitiya on Musk's social media platform X. To which Musk replied in his only public commentary so far on the case: "Yes."

GETTING FOOD DELIVERED IN NEW YORK IS SIMPLE. FOR THE WORKERS WHO DO IT, GETTING PAID IS NOT

New Yorkers place over 100 million food delivery orders each year via a very simple process: press a few buttons on an app and it's in their hands in about 30 minutes.

For the delivery workers, the process is anything but simple. And it has only become more complex since the city instituted a new wage formula designed to guarantee they make at least $18 an hour. Some of the biggest app platforms, who opposed the change, responded by limiting workers' hours, making it more

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difficult for customers to tip, and changing how pay is calculated from week to week.

That's left workers like Greiber Pineda scrambling to navigate opaque changes.

Pineda initially earned so much from Uber Eats under the new wage system that when a snowstorm hit New York City in January, he was motivated to work 11 1/2 hours straight, shuttling 37 meals on his moped "through the cold, the snow, everything." A few days later, the app changed its pay system — sending him around $200 instead of the $300 he expected.

"When we got paid we were up in the air, like 'What happened here?'" Pineda, of Brooklyn, said in Spanish.

Frustrated, Pineda now spends more time on side hustles. On a recent weekday morning, he sold coffee and arepas to fellow delivery workers from Venezuela and Colombia outside a Chick-fil-A across the road from Brooklyn's Barclays Center arena. Nearby, two workers from Guinea changed the oil on a scooter while others from Latin America, China and Turkmenistan picked up orders for apps like Uber Eats, Grubhub and DoorDash. The city estimates that, like Pineda, 39% of delivery workers speak English "less than well."

A few months ago, none of these workers were earning an hourly wage. Like most food delivery drivers across the U.S., they instead logged into the apps when they wanted and earned money by accepting individual delivery jobs. Some jobs made financial sense. Others might not even cover the cost of gas, but many workers said "yes" as often as possible to earn priority

access to premium orders or other perks on the gamified apps.

That's no longer the case in New York, which became the first major city to institute a wage floor for app-based food delivery workers on Dec. 4. Seattle followed in January with a similar law that extends to nearly all app-mediated work.

Before the change, New York City surveyed its estimated 122,000 delivery workers, finding they earned $14 an hour on average. Half of that came from tips and around $2 went to equipment and maintenance, mostly for e-bikes and mopeds.

Exposed to deadly traffic and violent attacks, they were working a dangerous job, but weren't even making the city's minimum wage, which rose from $15 to $16 this year.

"This is one of the ways, one of the few ways that an immigrant can get by, at least in this city, which is pricey," said Pineda.

While some workers say they're earning less under the new rules, labor organizers and the app companies say average earnings have increased. But the apps are still cutting costs and have the advantage of seeing their workers' data as they figure out how to do that.

"Delivery companies are still undermining or trying to undermine the minimum pay victory by being less transparent," said Ligia Gullalpa, executive director of the Workers Justice Project.

None of the major app companies operating in New York City responded to a request for detailed pay statistics. They defended reducing

worker hours as key to reducing downtime, in line with the law's incentives.

"Seattle & New York City failed to think about the negative impacts of their actions," Uber Eats spokesperson Josh Gold said in an email, adding that he believes there are better options to protect worker flexibility, such as a California law that recategorized gig workers as independent contractors.

DoorDash spokesperson Eli Scheinholtz in a statement called the laws in both cities "extreme," adding that "the end result has been the same: higher fees for consumers, fewer orders for merchants, and less work for Dashers."

When the law took effect in New York, both apps announced that customers in the city could no longer add a tip during checkout — instead making it available only after a driver had been assigned in DoorDash's case, or after the food was delivered for Uber Eats. Apps also tacked on additional fees for New York City customers, starting around $2. Fees to restaurants are capped at 23% of the purchase price.

New York City's rule allows apps to either pay around $30 an hour on average for the "active time" workers spend delivering orders, or $18 an hour on average for the entire time they are logged in, including "passive time" spent waiting for a job. The apps don't have to pay workers who don't do any deliveries. Companies can also decide retroactively which of the two calculations they'll use, so delivery workers never know exactly what they're being paid for until up to a week later.

The switch is likely how Pineda ended up with lower pay after the January storm according to

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pay stubs and notices shared by him and others.

Seattle's system only counts active time, paid at a minimum of 44 cents per minute, plus 74 cents per mile. In New York City, there's no mileage paid.

"People depend on you to bring them their food," said Daniel Mendoza, a delivery worker who gets coffee and breakfast from Pineda, and is also from Venezuela. "We make magic."

Mendoza said in February that the new system had been more lucrative for him.

But on March 4, Doordash made the same switch that Uber Eats did that had so angered Pineda. It's impossible to say if Mendoza's pay will go up or down, but it will become less predictable.

In a statement, Doordash said that the payment method it had used since December was unsustainable and that workers like Mendoza "can also qualify for additional weekly pay adjustments."

GrubHub spokesperson Najy Kamal said in a statement that delivery workers are earning more overall in both New York and Seattle, and the company is committed to complying with the new pay standards.

Meanwhile, Pineda continues to make money the old-fashioned way. As he served the delivery workers near the Chick-fil-A recently, a worker from the fast-food chain poked his head out of the door, and yelled, asking what kind of arepas he had. Beef, Pineda's girlfriend shouted back.

"I'll take two," he said, waiting for her to deliver them to him — in exchange for some paper money.

ROADSEEK
Spicy Deluxe Sandwich
Meals Include/Incluyen
Salads/Ensaladas
Drinks/Bebidas
Treats/Postres
Seasonal Mango Pass

SOME DOORBELL CAMERAS SOLD ON AMAZON AND OTHER ONLINE SITES HAVE MAJOR SECURITY FLAWS, REPORT SAYS

amazon
nazon

EKEN

Some doorbell cameras sold by Amazon and other online retailers have security flaws that could allow bad actors to view footage from the devices or control them completely, according to an investigation published by Consumer Reports.

Researchers from the product-review organization said they found major vulnerabilities in cameras manufactured by the Chinese company Eken Group Ltd., which produces video doorbells under the brand names EKEN and Tuck, among others.

The devices have been sold online by Walmart, Shein, Sears and Temu, which said it removed Eken-made doorbells from its platform after Consumer Reports reached out to the company.

A Walmart spokesperson said the doorbell cameras Consumer Reports brought to its attention were listed on its marketplace by third-party sellers. The spokesperson said Walmart has removed those items and was offering refunds under its return policy.

Amazon, which has given the EKEN and Tuck doorbells its coveted "Amazon's Choice" badge, did not immediately respond to a request for comment. But the doorbell cameras appeared to be available on its site.

Sears and Shein also did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Researchers said the doorbell cameras made by Eken Group can be controlled by a company-operated app called Aiwit. They said bad actors can create an account on the app and gain access to a nearby doorbell camera by pairing it with another device. That gives them the ability to view footage — or access still images — and

lock out the owner from the device, Consumer Reports said.

The group's researchers also found that some of the doorbell cameras don't have a registration code required by the Federal Communications Commission.

"Major e-commerce platforms like Amazon and Walmart need to do a better job of vetting sellers and products sold on their platforms, so consumers are not put at risk," Justin Brookman, director of tech policy at Consumer Reports, said in a statement.

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ONE TECH TIP: CHANGE THESE SETTINGS ON X TO LIMIT CALLS AND HIDE YOUR IP ADDRESS

Happening now
vacy
ertising
Marketing
X for Business
Developers
Directory

Elon Musk's social media platform X has made audio and video calling capabilities available to all users, not just those with paid accounts. But a privacy issue has emerged from the rollout.

The changes have made it so anyone following you on the platform formerly known as Twitter can call and see your Internet Protocol address by default.

An IP address lists where your phone or computer lives on the internet — it's how you get messages and load websites. An exposed IP address can make you more vulnerable to dangers from spam to ID theft to revealing your location.

It poses perhaps the most serious risk to people like human-rights activists who create online accounts under pseudonyms to avoid persecution.

If you want to avoid random calls from people you may not know or want to hide your IP address from the X community, here are the mobile app settings you need to change:

HEAD TO YOUR DIRECT MESSAGE SETTINGS

Navigate to the X app on your phone. Click on your profile picture in the upper-left corner, navigate to "Settings and Support," then hit "Settings and privacy."

Touch the "Privacy and safety" menu and then scroll to the "Direct messages" subcategory.

HOW TO LIMIT WHO CAN SEE YOUR IP ADDRESS

If you want to use X's new audio and video call functions but limit the exposure of your

FaceTime
Mail
Calendar
News
Maps
Notes
TV
Health
Reminders
Podcasts
Wallet
Clock
Settings

IP address, scroll down and toggle on the "Enhanced call privacy" option. It's toggled off by default.

X says this setting will help you avoid revealing your IP address to your contact during a call.

In this same menu, you also have a number of choices to limit who can call you, including an option that allows only people in your address book to reach out.

How to turn off audio and video calls entirely

In the "Direct messages" menu, toggle off the "Enable audio and video calling" option. This will collapse the previous options and prevent anyone on X from calling you.

Limiting IP address visibility and turning off the calls entirely is only available in the settings if you are using the mobile app version of the former Twitter. For now, at least, there does not appear to be an option to turn off the feature using the web version of X.
A representative for X did not immediately return a message for comment.

SPORTS ANALYTICS MAY BE OUTNUMBERED WHEN IT COMES TO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

When it comes to artificial intelligence, the sports analytics crowd may be outnumbered.

The people who killed the sacrifice bunt and turned NBA games into a 3-point shooting contest aren't quite sure what will happen when AI fully invades sports — whether in the front office or on the field.

"I've been in computer science a long time. This is the first thing we don't understand," Philadelphia 76ers team president Daryl Morey said at the MIT Sloan Sports Analytics Conference.

"That's mind-boggling," Morey said. "We've actually now created something, with 0's and 1's, where every step we've made the creation, but we don't understand the results."

The MIT conference annually brings together thousands of number-crunching sports nerds, who turn their data models loose on hot topics such as diversity, gambling or reversing the slowing pace of baseball games. But this year's gathering had a decidedly AI focus, with panels and working papers on the potential for generative artificial intelligence to transform sports.

One talk looked at baseball strategy, another on how to provide Olympic content for the 200-plus countries competing in four dozen different sports, and a research paper used AI to provide player tracking data from a soccer broadcast.

Morey, one of the conference's founders, was on a panel called "Winning with AI: The future of AI in sports." The discussion touched on potential for improvements in scheduling, player safety, advertising, ticket sales and broadcasts that convert the on-field action into a Disney cartoon.

Kevin Lopes, an ESPN vice president for development and innovation, compared AI to the iPhone, which transformed everyday life by giving everyone with some coding skills the chance to come up with their own applications.

"I think about that when I think about generative AI," Lopes said. "I don't think anyone quite knows what that is yet. That's fascinating to me, and what's going to be the next thing.

"We exist in this moment in history, in my humble opinion, that every day we're seeing

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Penn Medicine

new incremental innovations in AI," he said. "What's it going to be for the freshman at MIT in two years."

Make no mistake, though: AI is already here.

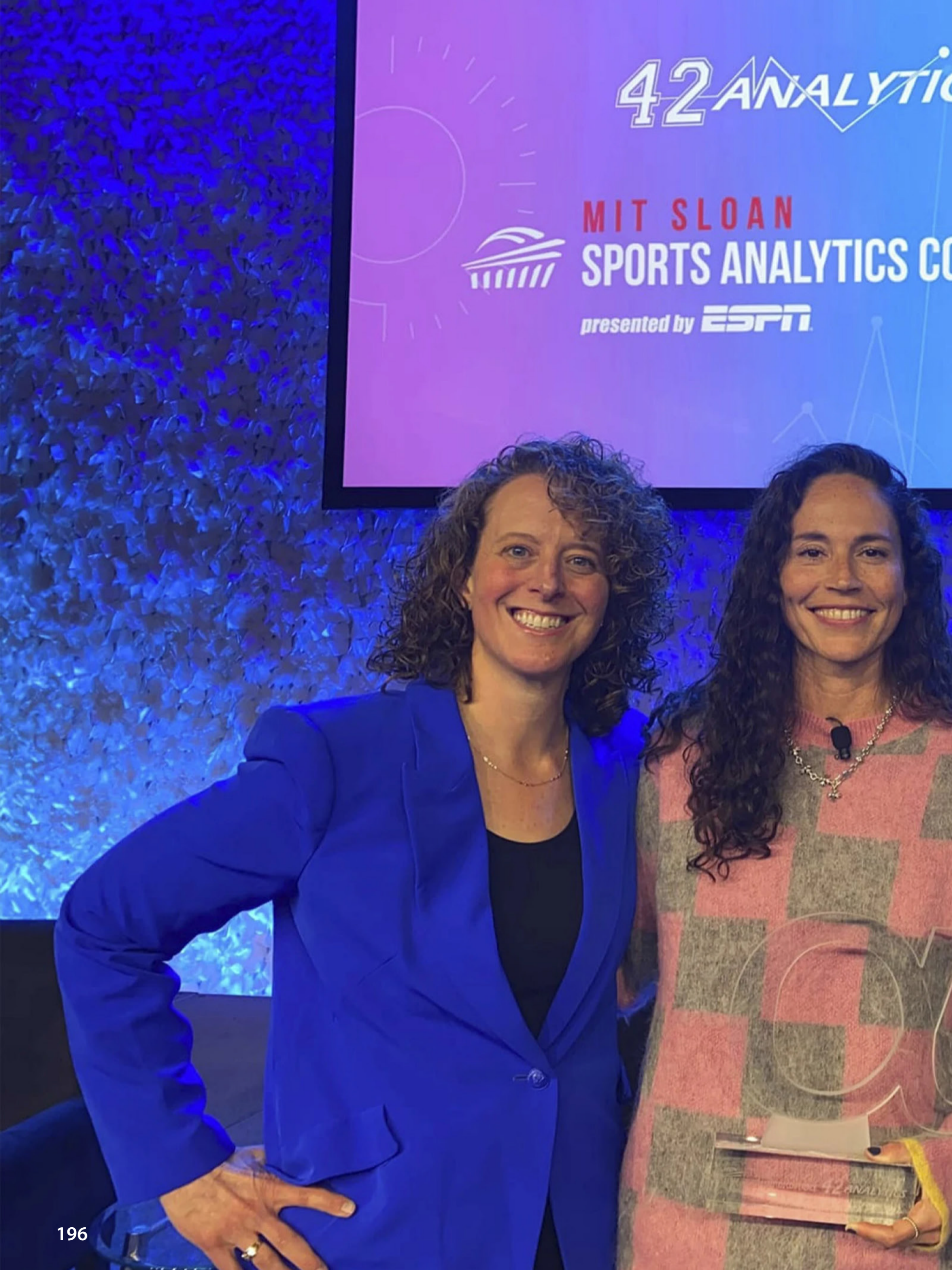
Ballplayer-turned-broadcaster Carlos Peña said AI can be used to help a batter eliminate his blind spots. (But players will resist, he said, unless it's stripped of its "mathiness" and translated into simple guidance such as, "look for the fastball up and in.")

Anticipating complaints from scouts and others who say analytics can't replace intuition, Pena said: "That's not what we're trying to do here. What we're trying to do is enhance intuition."

Christopher Jackson, the head of digital data and analytics for the Olympics, said AI can help create website content to satisfy fans of lower-profile sports from far-flung countries that usually don't draw the attention of the mainstream media. One problem: Olympic planning is measured in decades, while major changes in AI come around every six months or so.

Amazon Web Services global head Julie Souza said the NFL is saving $2 million a year by running AI on its schedule, which has 1 quadrillion — that's a one followed by 15 zeros — potential options that must account for holidays, shared stadiums and travel. AI is already dissecting which plays — and even which bodily poses — are most likely to cause injuries in a football game, she said.

"Rules are changing to make the game safer, to make the players more protected," Souza said,


42 ANALYTIC
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presented by ESPN

adding that the information can trickle up from football to the military and others.

"It's not just the NFL benefitting from this," she said. "We're not going back. There's no way to go back from this. We're just learning more and making the game safer. Which is great not just for the league, but for us on fans to have our players on the field more."

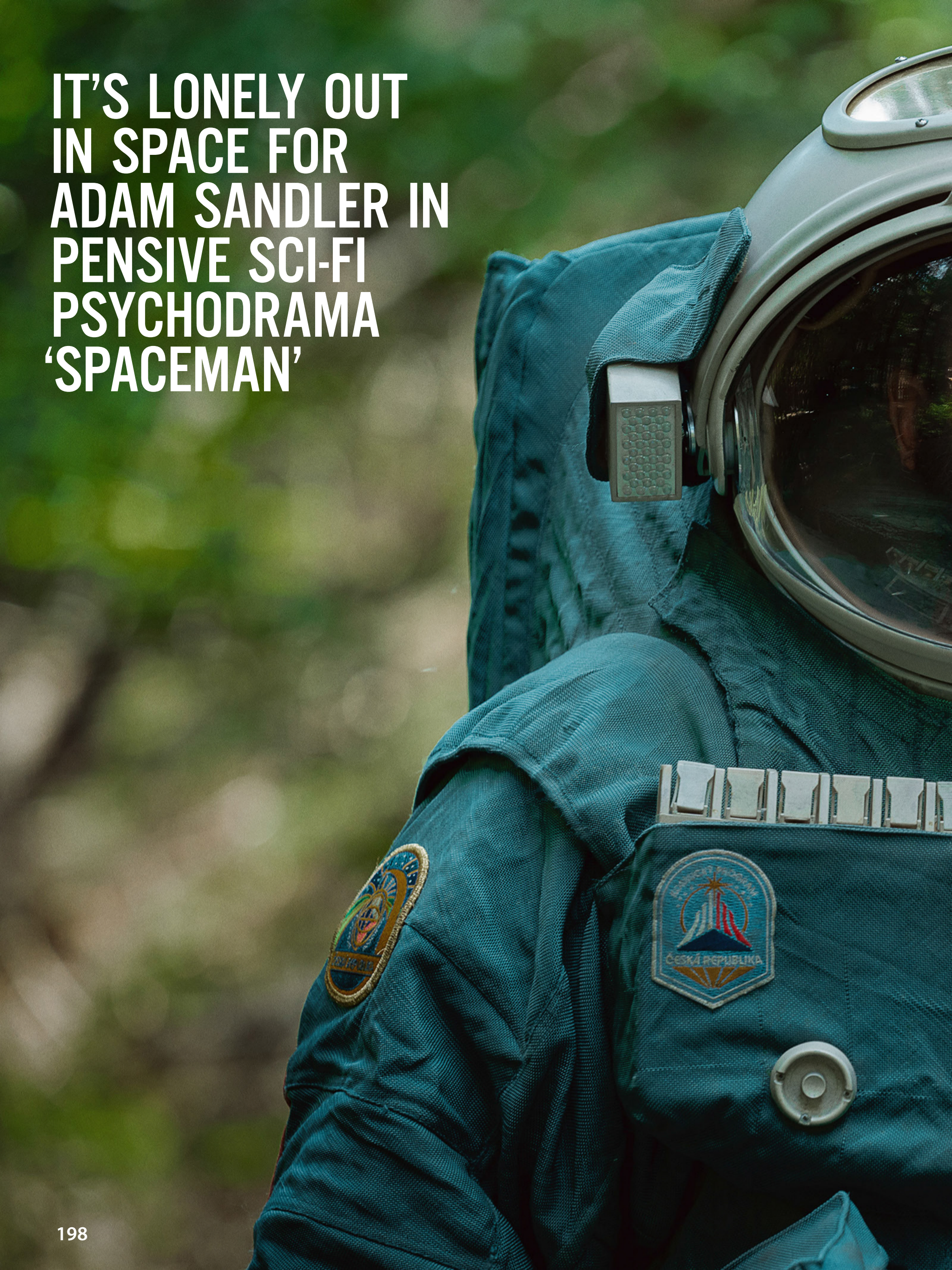
Morey said the 76ers use AI for productivity — speeding up routine tasks — but it isn't quite sharp enough yet to outdo the humans they have trying to improve their predictive modeling. "We haven't found a ton there, but that will change," he said.

And they will keep trying.

"There's a lot of scary things with this, but it sort of is. This is happening," Morey said. "There isn't going to be a way to do all the safety stuff. ... There isn't actually going to be any way to control it. You really just lean into it, honestly, to help your business, to help what you're doing.

"And there could be a very scary thing you hit. But what's the alternative? Not embracing it?" he said. "That makes no sense."

IT'S LONELY OUT IN SPACE FOR ADAM SANDLER IN PENSIVE SCI-FI PSYCHODRAMA 'SPACEMAN'



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Spaceman | Official Trailer | Netflix

David Bowie's Major Tom, sitting in his tin can. Elton John's Rocket Man, missing Earth and his wife. Matt Damon in "The Martian," left behind to starve. Matthew McConaughey in "Interstellar," weeping as he watches his kids age without him.

Much art has been made of the infinite loneliness of space travel. And how could it not? Loneliness may be a universal human condition, but what could be lonelier than being removed from the human race entirely?

And so when Adam Sandler, as moody Czech astronaut Jakub in Johan Renck's "Spaceman," is asked by a young girl during a broadcast to Earth if he's lonely, he answers in platitudes but his eyes betray the truth. Yes, he is lonely. Very lonely.

At one point in Sandler's career, the idea of the actor in a spacesuit as an anxious astronaut heading to the outskirts of Jupiter could only have signaled comedy. But we've seen enough great work at this point from Sandler in dramatic roles to know what he's capable of when the stars are aligned, and he gives a hugely empathetic performance here.

If there's a flaw in "Spaceman," despite its tantalizing promise, it's not a lack of acting heft but strangely, a lack of story heft. Adapted from the novel "Spaceman of Bohemia" by Jaroslav Kalfar, it paints a world that should be fascinating but is often reduced to seductive yet ultimately frustrating dream sequences. They're lovely, but we'd like to actually know more about Jakub and his past on Earth, not to mention his relationship with wife Lenka (the always-wonderful Carey Mulligan) beyond seeing her run through yellow fields of flowers.

READ MORE

Rob Schneider, left, and Adam Sandler attend the Night of Too Many Stars comedy benefit for autism programs at the Beacon Theatre, Monday, Dec. 11, 2023, in New York. (Photo by CJ Rivera/ Invision/AP)

Adam Sandler plays pickup game before No. 10 Arizona faces Colorado

We begin halfway through Jakub's mission. That's 189 days since he left Lenka and Earth for a solo trip to explore the Chopra cloud near Jupiter, glistening and purple and mysterious, beating the Koreans to the punch.

What year are we in? The spaceship looks late-20th century, not 2024 and certainly not futuristic. The production design is terrific here, evoking what such an environment might look like when a guy's been living in it for six months — rather like what a studio apartment might look like after six months without a cleaning. There are half-consumed bottles of space food. The toilet is constantly malfunctioning, but ground control cares more about fixing the cameras than the plumbing.

Fact is, Jakub, like John's Rocket Man, misses his wife. They've been sending each other video messages, but hers have become spotty. She is pregnant, and angry at having been abandoned for a year. In fact, Lenka records a message telling Jakub she's deeply unhappy and wants to leave him.

All of which creates a huge Houston-we-have-a-problem moment for the mission, which needs a focused astronaut. The head of the Euro Space program, Commissioner Tuma (Isabella Rossellini)

1741
ATTENTION

decides Jakub won't get to see Lenka's message. But he senses something is wrong.

And then one night, Jakub awakens with a spider crawling out from his mouth.

Phew — it's only a dream. But soon enough, the spider appears for real, an actual, six-eyed, life-sized alien. Well, we think for real. The spider could be a dream, and we're surely meant to consider that possibility. (In fact, maybe the whole mission is a dream and Jakub is a guy in a studio apartment, but let's not go there.)

At first, Jakub thinks he's going nuts. He puts on his suit and tries to kill the alien with exterminating gas. But the spider helpfully explains that this won't hurt him. He is, he recounts, on his way from his own planet, traveling through space and time. Oh, and he may have been around since the beginning of the universe. Also: he's voiced by Paul Dano, in a gentle tone arguably reminiscent of HAL in "2001: A Space Odyssey."

If HAL were, perhaps, a therapist — because that's essentially what the spider becomes, trying to ease Jakub's loneliness but also very curious about his life on Earth. He calls Jakub "skinny human," and absolutely loves the hazelnut spread "skinny human" eats, calling it "rich and creamy."

But mainly they discuss Jakub's marriage. Jakub is defensive. "Why do you resist exploration?" asks the spider, whom Jakub names Hanuš. At another point, Hanuš asks: "You have many boundaries, skinny human, perhaps they are the cause of your loneliness?"

This interplay is toggled with scenes of Lenka back home, as well as flashbacks of the genesis of the couple's love, memories that the spider

Spaceman starring Adam Sandler | Official First Look | Netflix

forces Jakub to explore — along with that whole genesis-of-the-universe thing.

And so the spaceship approaches the mysterious purple cloud, a place that represents both the beginning and perhaps the end, while Jakub approaches an understanding of his love for Lenka and where that all fits in the universe, too.

These late scenes are both beautiful visually and somewhat lacking. Is the message simply that one must travel across space and time (and past Jupiter) to realize what love means? Questions arise but are not explored. For example, we learn briefly that Jakub's father back in Czechoslovakia had been an informer under Soviet rule, but little time is taken to detail how this affects Jakub.

Still, it's a pleasant and occasionally mesmerizing ride, thanks in no small measure to Sandler's skillful empathy and yet another absorbing turn by Mulligan, who never disappoints. In the constellation that is Hollywood, her star continues to be one of the brightest.

"Spaceman," a Netflix release, has been rated R by the Motion Picture Association "for language." Running time: 107 minutes. Two and a half stars out of four.

EUROPE'S DIGITAL MARKETS ACT IS FORCING TECH GIANTS TO MAKE CHANGES. HERE'S WHAT THAT WILL LOOK LIKE

Europeans scrolling their phones and computers this week will get new choices for default browsers and search engines, where to download iPhone apps and how their personal online data is used.

They're part of changes required under the Digital Markets Act, a set of European Union regulations that six tech companies classed as "gatekeepers" — Amazon, Apple, Google parent Alphabet, Meta, Microsoft and TikTok owner ByteDance.

The DMA is the latest in a series of regulations that Europe has passed as a global leader in reining in the dominance of large tech companies. Tech giants have responded - sometimes reluctantly - by changing some of their long-held ways of doing business — such as Apple allowing people to install smartphone apps outside of its App Store.

The new rules have broad but vague goals of making digital markets "fairer" and "more contestable." They are kicking in as efforts around the world to crack down on the tech industry are picking up pace.

Here's a look at how the Digital Markets Act will work:

WHAT COMPANIES HAVE TO FOLLOW THE RULES?

Some 22 services, from operating systems to messenger apps and social media platforms, will be in the DMA's crosshairs.

They include Google services like Maps, YouTube, the Chrome browser and Android operating system, plus Amazon's Marketplace and Apple's Safari Browser and iOS.

Meta's Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp are included as well as Microsoft's Windows and LinkedIn.

The companies face the threat of hefty fines worth up to 20% of their annual global revenue for repeated violations — which could amount to billions of dollars — or even a breakup of their businesses for "systematic infringements."

WHAT EFFECT WILL THE RULES HAVE GLOBALLY?

The Digital Markets Act is a fresh milestone for the 27-nation European Union in its longstanding role as a worldwide trendsetter in clamping down on the tech industry.

The bloc has previously hit Google with whopping fines in antitrust cases, rolled out tough rules to clean up social media and is bringing in world-first artificial intelligence regulations.

Now, places like Japan, Britain, Mexico, South Korea, Australia, Brazil and India are drawing up their own versions of DMA-like rules aimed at preventing tech companies from dominating digital markets.

"We're seeing copycats around the world already," said Bill Echikson, senior fellow at the Center for European Policy Analysis, a Washington-based think tank. The DMA "will become the defacto standard" for digital regulation in the democratic world, he said.

Officials will be looking to Brussels for guidance, said Zach Meyers, assistant director at the Center for European Reform, a think tank in London.

"If it works, many Western countries will probably try to follow the DMA to avoid fragmentation and the risk of taking a different approach that fails," he said.

HOW WILL DOWNLOADING APPS CHANGE?

In one of the biggest changes, Apple has said it will let European iPhone users download apps

Choisissez votre vigateur par défaut

Mozilla
Firefox

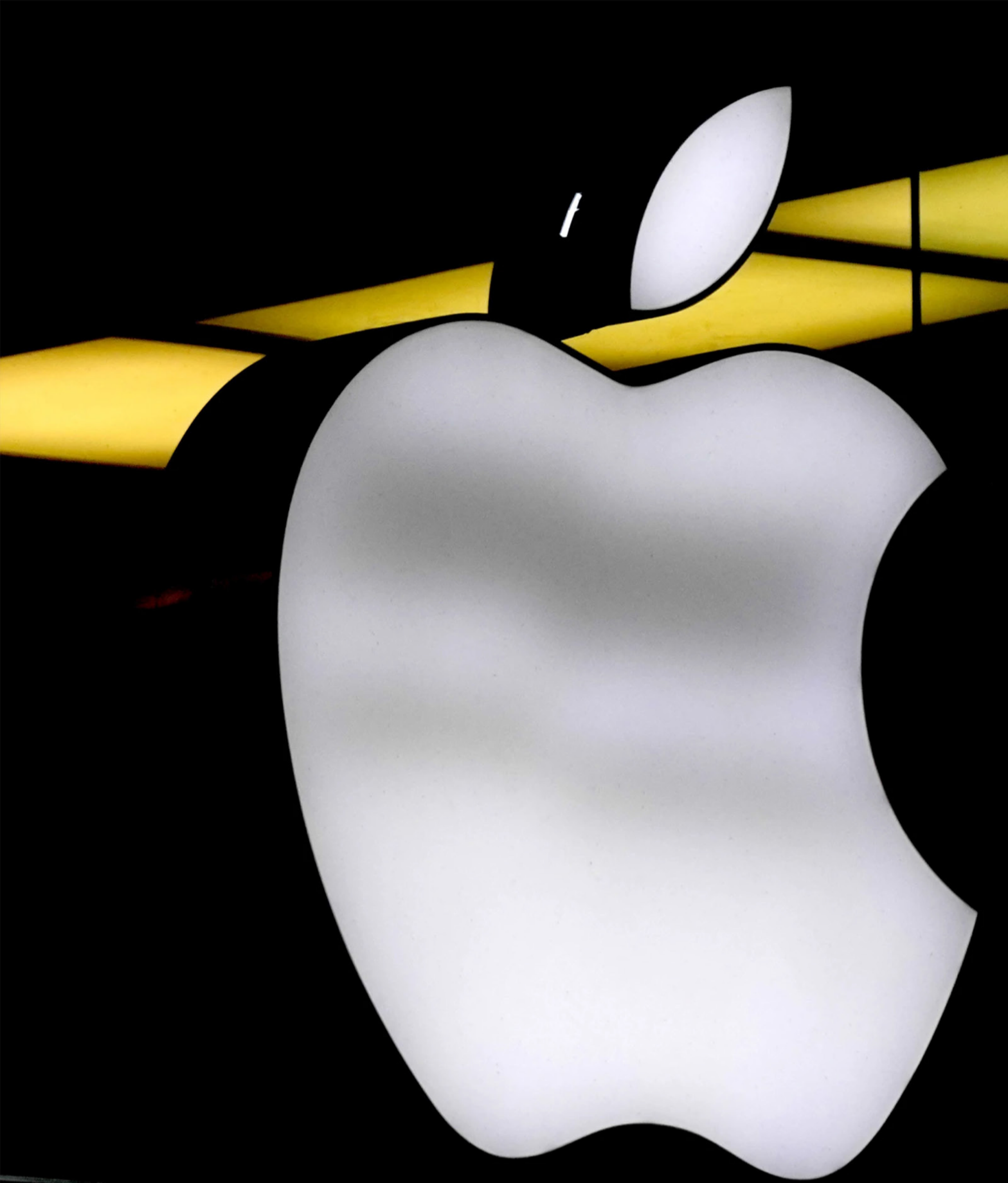
Yandex LLC
Yandex

Aloha Mobile
Aloha

Mike Tigas
Onion Browser

Ecosia
Ecosia

Apple
Safari



outside its App Store, which comes installed on its mobile devices.

The company has long resisted such a move, with a big chunk of its revenue coming from the 30% fee it charges for payments — such as for Disney+ subscriptions — made through iOS apps. Apple has warned that "sideloading" apps will come with added security risks.

Now, Apple is cutting those fees it collects from app developers in Europe that opt to stay within the company's payment-processing system. But it's adding a 50-euro cent fee for each iOS app installed through third-party app stores, which critics say will deter the many existing free apps — whose developers currently don't pay any fee — from jumping ship.

"Why would they possibly opt into a world where they have to pay a 50 cent per-user fee?" said Avery Gardiner, Spotify's global director of competition policy. "So those alternative app stores will never get traction, because they'll be missing this huge chunk of apps that would need to be there in order for customers to find the store attractive."

"That is utterly at odds with the very purpose of the DMA," Gardiner added.

Brussels will be closely scrutinizing whether tech companies are complying.

EU competition chief Margrethe Vestager said this week that after 10 years on the job, "I have seen quite a number of antitrust cases and quite a lot of creativity built into how to work around the rules that we have."

HOW WILL PEOPLE GET MORE OPTIONS ONLINE?

Consumers won't be forced into default choices for key services.

Android users can pick which search engine to use by default, while iPhone users will get to choose which browser will be their go-to. Europeans will see choice screens on their devices. Microsoft, meanwhile, will stop forcing people to use its Edge browser.

The idea is to stop people from being nudged into using Apple's Safari browser or Google's Search app. But smaller players still worry that they might end up worse off than before.

Users might just stick with what they recognize because they don't know anything about the other options, said Christian Kroll, CEO of Berlin-based search engine Ecosia.

Ecosia has been pushing for Apple and Google to include more information about rival services in the choice screens.

"If people don't know what the alternatives are, it's rather unlikely that many of them will select an alternative," Kroll said. "I'm a big fan of the DMA. I am not sure yet if it will have the results that we're hoping for."

HOW WILL INTERNET SEARCHES CHANGE?

Some Google search results will show up differently, because the DMA bans companies from giving preference to their own services.

So, for example, searches for hotels will now display an extra "carousel" of booking sites like Expedia. Meanwhile, the Google Flights button

aws
DS Performance electric engine
385kg / 52 kWh
250 (338)
250
900
5 160
1 770
3 100
1 050
40
31
8
16
7

on the search result display will be removed and the site will be listed among the blue links on search result pages.

Users also will have options to stop being profiled for targeted advertising based on their online activity.

Google users are getting the choice to stop data from being shared across the company's services to help better target them with ads.

Meta is allowing users to separate their Facebook and Instagram accounts so their personal information can't be combined for ad targeting.

The DMA also requires messaging systems to be able to work with each other. Meta, which owns the only two chat apps that fall under the rules, is expected to come up with a proposal on how Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp users can exchange text messages, videos and images.

Image: Geert Vanden Wijngaert

APPLE GETS FINED NEARLY $2 BILLION BY THE EU FOR HINDERING MUSIC STREAMING COMPETITION

The European Union leveled its first antitrust penalty against Apple this week, fining the U.S. tech giant nearly $2 billion for unfairly favoring its own music streaming service by forbidding rivals like Spotify from telling users how they could pay for cheaper subscriptions outside of iPhone apps.

Apple muzzled streaming services from telling users about payment options available through their websites, which would avoid the 30% fee charged when people pay through apps downloaded with the iOS App Store, said the European Commission, the 27-nation bloc's executive arm and top antitrust enforcer.

"This is illegal. And it has impacted millions of European consumers who were not able to make a free choice as to where, how and at what price to buy music streaming subscriptions," Margrethe Vestager, the EU's competition commissioner, said at a news conference in Brussels.

Apple — which contests the decision — behaved this way for a decade, resulting in "millions of people who have paid two, three euros more per month for their music streaming service than they would otherwise have had to pay," she said.

It's the culmination of a bitter, yearslong feud between Apple and Spotify over music streaming supremacy. A complaint from the Swedish streaming service five years ago triggered the investigation that led to the 1.8 billion-euro ($1.95 billion) fine.

The decision comes the same week new rules take effect to prevent tech giants from cornering digital markets.

The EU has led global efforts to crack down on Big Tech companies, including three fines for Google totaling more than 8 billion euros, charging Meta with distorting the online classified ad market and forcing Amazon to change its business practices.

Apple's fine is so high because it includes an extra lump sum to deter it from offending again or other tech companies from carrying out similar offenses, the commission said.

It's not the only penalty that the tech giant could face: Apple is still trying to resolve a separate EU antitrust investigation into its mobile payments service by promising to open up its tap-and-go mobile payment system to rivals.

Apple hit back at the commission and Spotify, saying it would appeal the fine.

"The decision was reached despite the Commission's failure to uncover any credible evidence of consumer harm, and ignores the realities of a market that is thriving, competitive, and growing fast," the company said in a statement.

It said Spotify stood to benefit from the EU's move, asserting that the Swedish streaming giant met over 65 times with the commission during the investigation, holds a 56% share of Europe's music streaming market and doesn't pay Apple for using its App Store.

"Ironically, in the name of competition, today's decision just cements the dominant position of a successful European company that is the digital music market's runaway leader," Apple said.

Spotify said it welcomed the EU fine, without addressing Apple's accusations.

Image: Chris Delmas

Image: Geert Vanden Wijngaert

"This decision sends a powerful message — no company, not even a monopoly like Apple, can wield power abusively to control how other companies interact with their customers," Spotify said in a blog post.

The commission's investigation initially centered on two concerns. One was the iPhone maker's practice of forcing app developers selling digital content to use its in-house payment system, which charges a 30% commission on all subscriptions.

But the EU later dropped that to focus on how Apple prevents app makers from telling their users about cheaper ways to pay for subscriptions that don't involve going through an app.

The investigation found that Apple banned streaming services from telling users about how much subscription offers cost outside of their apps, putting links in their apps to pay for alternative subscriptions or even emailing users to tell them about different pricing options.

"As a result, millions of European music streaming users were left in the dark about all available options," Vestager said, adding that the commission's investigation found that just over 20% of consumers who would have signed up to Spotify's premium service didn't do so because of the restrictions.

The fine comes just before new EU rules are set to kick in that are aimed at preventing tech companies from dominating digital markets.

The Digital Markets Act, imposes a set of do's and don'ts on "gatekeeper" companies including Apple, Meta, Google parent Alphabet, and TikTok parent ByteDance — under threat of hefty fines.

The DMA's provisions are designed to prevent tech giants from the sort of behavior that's at the heart of the Apple investigation. Apple has already revealed how it will comply, including allowing iPhone users in Europe to use app stores other than its own and enabling developers to offer alternative payment systems.

Vestager warned that the commission would be carefully scrutinizing how Apple follows the new rules.

"Apple will have to open its gates to its ecosystem to allow users to easily find the apps they want, pay for them in any way they want and use them on any device that they want," she said.

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